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■Hungary After Glasnost:
A Symposium

Partisan Review 2

William Phillips
Further Notes Toward a Definition of the Canon

Sidney Hook
Curricular Politics

Edith Kurzweil
Hungarian and American Psychoanalysis

Lionel Abel
The Hero of Metatheater

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Péter Esterházy

REVIEWS
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Poetry from Poland: Julia Hartwig, Ryszard Krynicki, Bronislaw Maj, Artur Międzyrzecki, Jan Polkowski, Wistawa Szymborska, Wiktor Woroszylski

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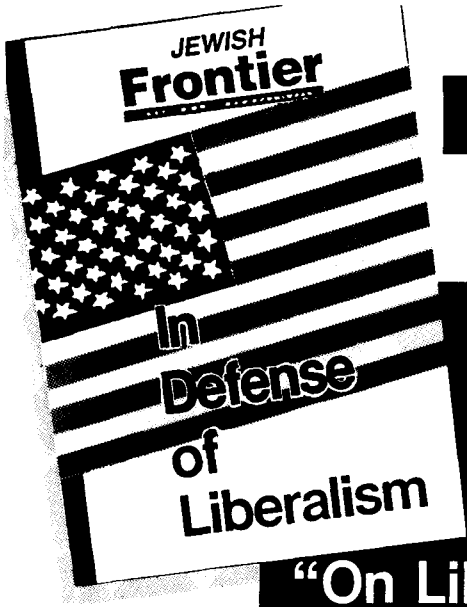

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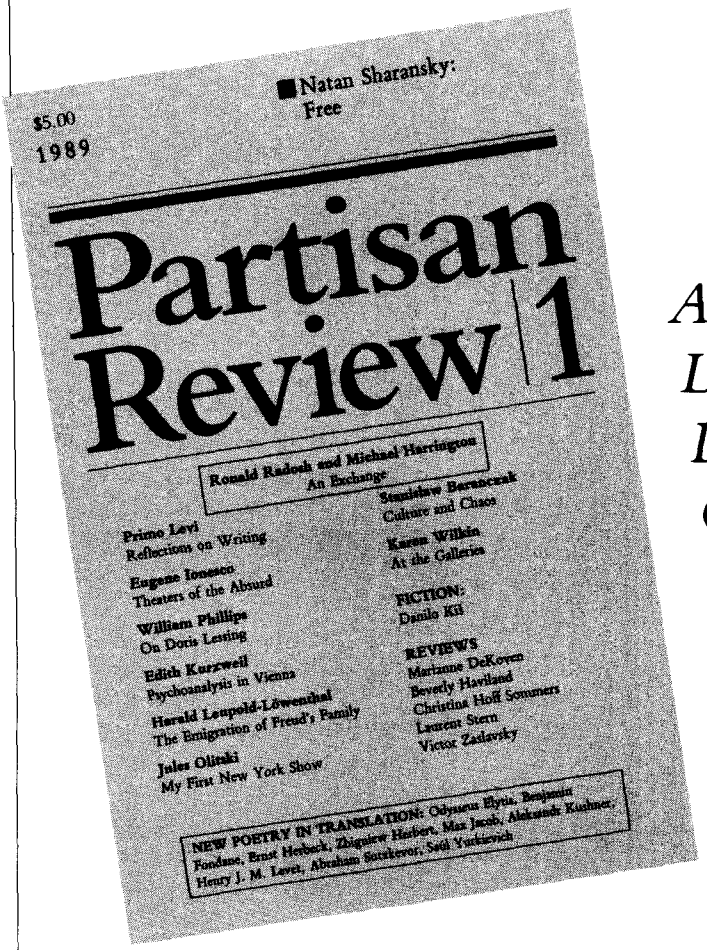
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COMMENT

FURTHER NOTES TOWARD A DEFINITION OF THE CANON AND THE CURRICULUM

In an introduction to a partisan book about the current debates over the curriculum, Gerald Graff, I am sorry to say, has moved away from his former cogent criticism of the new academic trends to a more sympathetic attitude. But he has raised a number of difficult and pertinent questions that those who defend a more traditional curriculum cannot ignore.

Essentially, Graff argues that the university is not and cannot be a monolithic institution, that it reflects the pluralism of beliefs that exist in the society as a whole, and that no one person or group has the authority to enforce any single point of view. He also maintains, rather persuasively, that the university should provide the students with discussions of divergent and competing beliefs—which is the essence of education. There are, however, a number of other problems that Graff ignores, and that neither the traditionalists nor the radicals have faced.

1. It is true that a single set of beliefs or methods of teaching cannot be prescribed, for almost by definition the university is made up of scholars and thinkers with divergent views, which are argued out in academic circles and in the intellectual life of the society. It is obviously also desirable that students should be made aware of different schools of thought and approaches to various subjects. In fact, this is what good teachers have always done. On the other hand, a recognition of legitimate disagreements does not preclude objections to illegitimate positions based on factional and political interests.

2. It should be fairly obvious that those who would cut down the curriculum and substitute the study of feminist, third-world, black, gay, and left-wing texts represent special interests, not scholarly ones. The texts they would like to substitute for the classics have not been selected by a consensus of the literary and intellectual community, but by groups challenging the consensus that has established the traditions and the classics we have inherited.

3. The basic question, and one that has been blurred in the academic debates, is how the classics have been chosen in the past. Certainly, they have not been chosen by administrative or faculty committees. To be sure, the curricula as a whole, and individual

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courses, have been devised by departments and individual teachers. But the texts have been selected from the general canon. And it always has been assumed that the major works of the past—which could be identified—constituted the intellectual achievements of Western civilization. With a few exceptions here and there, these works were known to every scholar and thinker. They were not put together by the whims of a few "elitist" academics. But what has been the actual process by which these works, from Plato to Proust—have been chosen? There is a popular myth that works deemed great at one time were forgotten in other periods, and vice versa. There have been a very few cases of such reversals, but on the whole this myth rests on an ignorance—or misreading—of literary history. There have been different views of various works, based on changing personal and historical sensibilities, but geniuses have not been demoted into bumbling talents. Nor has the reverse taken place. There is also, as I have suggested, the current fashionable notion that the so-called canon has been chosen by white, male, Christian, Western elitists, as though they constituted some kind of self-appointed committee throughout modern history.

4. What has happened to create the tradition is both simpler and more complicated. The so-called canon has never been decided by popular vote, or by academics, or by political pressure. Figures in various fields have been perpetuated by later figures. Thus Plato and Aristotle and Descartes, for example, have formed the basis of subsequent developments in philosophy. So, too, writers like Homer, Shakespeare, John Donne, and George Eliot, and so on up to the present, have been made part of the literary tradition by subsequent writers. Here and there the use of earlier writers by later ones has shifted, as in the feeling by Pope and Dryden that Shakespeare was not elegant enough for eighteenth-century tastes, or in the reevaluation of the metaphysical poets and Milton by T. S. Eliot. But these were not put-downs: the changes marked a shift in the choice of predecessors who were thought to make for a more important line of influence. In essence, the formation of the tradition—or the canon—is a creative process carried on by practitioners in philosophy, fiction, poetry, art, literary criticism, social thought, and so on. It may work positively, or negatively, as argued by Harold Bloom.

5. The problem of the curriculum is complicated, however, by the nature of the student body and its relation to teachers, to the culture, and to the different philosophies of education. And here

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writers like Graff and some revisionists have an argument—but not always the right one. For the solution is not to supplant the traditional curriculum with trendy authors and subjects.

It is true, as some of the anti-traditionalists claim, that the classics, particularly as taught by the sweeping Great Books surveys, may not have meaning for a vast number of unprepared students. But, then, neither will teaching them the intricacies of deconstruction, particularly with a Marxist or feminist literary slant. This is the problem created by mass education in a culture given to a populist version of democracy. And the pluralism advocated by the radicals has more to do with the academic pursuit of their own interests than with educating the enormous variety of students created by undifferentiated mass education.

Indeed, one of the main problems ignored by both sides of the curriculum dispute is that of the phenomenal growth of mass education. Those ideas and those works—and the obligatory questions of how to think about them—that can be presented to qualified students at the same time do not reach or interest the less qualified students, who presumably relate to more current books and the more recent trends of the popular culture.

Yet few educators challenge egalitarian pieties by making distinctions in the student body that might lead to different courses of study and types of education. Clearly, those who want to make the curriculum more up-to-date, more relevant, more radical, are pursuing a political agenda masked by educational and liberating claims.

* * *

A pamphlet presenting the case of what for a lack of a better term might be referred to as the radical or revisionist position in the controversy over the curriculum has just been put out by a group of directors of humanities institutes. It represents the consensus of a conference of directors sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies. It is sophisticated, learned, and its tone is reasonable and persuasive. But, in my opinion, it is somewhat disingenuous and sophistical.

There are two things wrong with the way the antitraditional case is argued. In general, the picture that is presented of the theories and practices of the academic radicals is an ideal one, far from the realities of the academic situation. When the pamphlet says that the classics, along with the entire cultural past—and of course, the

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curriculum—have always been subject to reexamination and rethinking, it sounds as thought its authors simply are uttering a cultural truism. But what it does not say is that what is advocated is not a normal and organic revision of tradition by leading thinkers and writers. It is rather an assault on the works of the past, indeed, on the very idea of tradition, by academics who are promoting third-world, black, literary feminist, and deconstructionist ideologies and reinterpreting the past in terms of these ideologies. If they merely wanted to resurrect a few neglected or forgotten works, there would be no controversy over the canon and the curriculum.

A number of statistics are presented in the pamphlet to prove that there actually have been very few changes in the curriculum at most of our universities. All that is happening, the contributors say, is that professors are looking at the works of the past in a new light, that is, in conformity with new philosophical, literary, and critical views. What they don't say is that these new views are turning our sense of the past upside down. And it is precisely these views that are factional, one-sided, and themselves in question. The notions, for example, that all ideas are relative, and that no interpretations of texts are privileged or more authoritative than others are not accepted by many of our best historians, philosophers, and literary critics. Perhaps the heart of the issue is that those who support the new revisionist curriculum are mostly academic theorists—not writers or practical literary critics.

W. P.

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HUNGARY AFTER GLASNOST: A SYMPOSIUM

Edith Kurzweil: We want to welcome all of you to meet our Hungarian friends. Some of you have asked me why *Partisan Review* is sponsoring the visit of seven Hungarian psychoanalysts. I will tell you briefly. I was at a conference on the history of psychoanalysis in Trieste—one of two Americans, the other one I didn't know. The Hungarians realized I was alone, and they took me in. I became part of their group, especially when they found out that three of my grandparents were Hungarian. We became good friends. I also realized at the conference that they had interesting things to say which we in America hadn't heard about, particularly about Hungarian psychoanalysis. I thought I would try to arrange a visit for them—which took nearly three years. However, thanks to a member of our Advisory Board I contacted the Soros Foundation. After the Soros Foundation commited itself to pay for transportation, our Advisory Board helped in many ways. My plan worked because the Columbia Psychoanalytic Institute, mostly thanks to Helen Meyers, Otto Kernberg and Ethel Person, agreed to cooperate in a conference bringing American psychoanalysts together with their Hungarian colleagues. We had the big meeting yesterday thanks to Ira Katznelson, the Dean of the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research. It was very well attended, and everybody seemed happy; the Americans were happy, the Hungarians were happy, at least so they told me, and even people from the audience kept coming up to say how pleased they were to have witnessed this "historical event." Helen gave a marvelous party for them last night, and seminars on Friday and this morning. Tonight we're here for dinner and conversation at Joanna's. Before I forget, I also want to thank those of our friends who have put up our Hungarian guests, who thereby really have gotten to know how one lives in New York. Next week they will find out how one lives in Boston.

This evening we're not going to talk about psychoanalysis, except peripherally, if it comes in. We mostly want to know what's going on in Hungary. Our friends will tell us, and they want you to ask questions. William Phillips will moderate and György Hidas will begin with an introduction. He, as well as Gábor Szönyi, Ivan Lust, and György Vikár, are doctors as well as psychoanalysts. Judith

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Editor's Note: This discussion took place on November 13, 1988, in New York City, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Rose.

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Székács, Klára Ajkay, and Sara Klaniczay—a special friend who drove me all the way to Balaton Boglarlelle because I had been there as an eight-year-old child—are psychologists and psychoanalysts. But now, I'll turn this over to William Phillips.

William Phillips: Okay. Before I tell you what the ground rules will be, I want to offer our special thanks to Edith for organizing this meeting. The word *organizing* is a little word, ten letters long, but it really was a gigantic task. And yesterday, as I sat in the audience and listened to the proceedings, I was impressed by the fact that this really was an historic event. So far as I know—I haven't researched it—this is the first time, since the Communist regime was established in Hungary, that the two psychoanalytic cultures have met and had a dialogue, here in New York. The American psychoanalysts were represented by some of their leading figures: Drs. Kernberg and Cooper, and of course Drs. Meyers, Ornstein, and Schaffer, and Dr. Schlesinger who moderated yesterday's morning session. Dr. Meyers moderated in the afternoon. Also, there was a seminar at Edith's house that I, as a layman, wasn't permitted to attend. But Edith tells me that Dr. Meyers gave a most brilliant summary of the development of the various schools, trends, and directions of American psychoanalysis.

The ground rules are very simple; Dr. Hidas is going to talk for ten minutes about Hungary's changing political situation, particularly as it affected the development and the practice of psychoanalysis. Then the floor will be open to questions which he and other of our Hungarian friends will answer. Since we're taping this discussion, please announce your name loudly when you get up to speak, to comment, or to ask questions.

György Hidas: Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for the opportunity to be here this evening and to speak to you and to answer your questions. I thank you for all of us. Dr. Kurzweil told you that we met the first time in Trieste, Italy, three years ago and that since then she organized this Hungarian-American encounter. I must say that this is not the first time that Hungarian and American psychoanalysts have met. In 1909 Freud and Ferenczi came to the United States, and Ferenczi was here in 1926. Too long ago. However, I was not asked to speak about psychoanalysis in Hungary but about the current political situation. Still, I want to emphasize that for us it is a very important event to be in your circle, and to meet the people around *Partisan Review* and the members of the Columbia Psychoanalytic Institute. Hungary is very far from you, but you are well in-

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formed. Your journalists are in Budapest, and you can read about us in *The New York Times.*

I want to recall, first of all, that in 1956 we had an uprising against the Stalinist regime. You know all about it, and that at that time, that is, thirty-two years ago, there was a regime connected with the name of János Kádár, an ambiguous historical figure who established a party system that had many good things. In 1956, this regime was changed for another one, which is also a Communist regime but which has attempted to change things for the better. This effort to change has very deep roots, and Hungarian leaders now are somewhat sluggish as well as proud in some way that they preceded Gorbachev in introducing changes. Now, everybody who was in charge or who was not in charge says that things went wrong, that the ideology was wrong, the conception was wrong, that we have to change for the better, that we have to revitalize and liberalize, but that we have to conserve the establishment. So there are some contradictions: there should be pluralism, there should be a multi-party system but the power should stay with one party. That is not clearly stated but it is the situation. Yet since last spring there has begun a new rivalry for power. First of all, it is a rivalry inside the party, inside the government. Things are not at all clear, but there is some sort of struggle for power, inside and outside. All those oppositional people who were underground, who were persecuted, now have begun to organize legally but there are not yet parties. There are clubs; there are other named organizations that are something like preparties. They have journals, and what half a year ago was illegal now is legal. Some members of the Hungarian Politburo are on the verge of advocating a new regime, and I might be exaggerating when I say that these new organizations are very good and that they should be larger and better organized. The important fact is that for the present there is no outstanding politician in Hungary. At the moment, we do not have any group of men or women who could mastermind the situation. At the same time, people are very tense, and the economic situation is very bad. The Hungarian state is in debt. The state owes eighteen billion dollars to the Western banks. This is very much; so far as I know it is the highest per capita debt among the East European countries. And it has to be paid back, through economic reforms that are twenty years late. In 1968 economic reforms were projected, but they didn't really begin. We should change our bureaucratically-oriented economy for a market-oriented one, a nonbureaucratic, free one. It is very difficult to speak about this in

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ten minutes. For instance, this year we had many demonstrations. There were demonstrations against the politics of the Rumanian government that is oppressing the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, the largest minority in Europe. Rumania has two million Hungarians. There were around fifty thousand people in the streets, and there was no violence in this very well-organized demonstration for the Hungarians against the Rumanian government. This is perhaps a good indication of the contradictions in Hungary. There are many demonstrations against the big hydropower station on the Danube that was planned over ten years ago, in cooperation with international corporations, and is now partly constructed. In these international corporations are Austrians with money and with building personnel, and the Czechoslovakian government. For years the Hungarian public wasn't openly informed about this. Now, many people from Hungary, from the United States, and from international organizations say that it is economically nonsensical and environmentally dangerous. Hungarian scientists condemn the project but they had already done so years ago. It is not economically useful for Hungary. Now, the people say that the government didn't inform them, but the government says that the people and the Hungarian academics are wrong; that it is already too late to change things; and that it is a *fait accompli*. Thus there is a big struggle. Now, however, people are allowed to demonstrate, and I think, I pray, that the important aspect of this thing is that now we can demonstrate, even if we do not yet have the hope that, just as in Austria, our demonstration will stop such a project. We cannot yet say no to things. The government still can say no even when we are right: the people say, or some of the people and academics and politicians say, that there's something wrong, but things nevertheless go forward. And in parliament, yes, we do have a parliament, the Party dominates. There are very strong Communist Party factions. Twenty-five percent of the members are not in the Party. Yet the wishes of the Party are followed. So they voted for this project. There are other struggles as well, but at present the government says Hungary should become an open society, that we should have pluralism, that there should be a multi-party system, that there should be freedom of speech and of the press. But where are the borders between the government and the Party? How far can we go? There is a basic contradiction, and I think that this makes for an explosive situation because everybody is wondering how far we can go in the struggle between the people and the power of the establishment. I think there

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is also something in the situation that would indicate we ought to wait rather than act. That means, of course, that many things happen behind the scenes. Today, someone here asked me why Prime Minister Grósz was here this year, and if he will resign from his post as a minister president. That shows how public opinion abroad can misunderstand what goes on. This spring Grósz took over the government and the party from Kádár. (I don't know if you know that Kádár had been party secretary in Hungary since 1956. That's a very long time. You have a president for eight years. We had one leader for thirty-two years, and it seemed longer.) And then Grósz did something unusual: he became the prime minister and general secretary of the Hungarian party all at once. At the time, he said it was an emergency situation that wouldn't last long, and that he would resign from the prime ministership. But now it is very difficult to improvise, to know what will happen in Hungary and in its political situation. We are really up in the air. To summarize a very critical situation: it is critical economically; the Hungarian rate of inflation is very high, about 20% this year; the population's economic situation over the last three years has gotten worse and worse. People are intolerant, there is a crisis. When I tell people here that in Hungary there is an explosive situation, it seems incomprehensible. But I think that this is important to keep in mind. In fact, Franz-Joseph Strauss, the late German prime minister, said that it is very important for Hungary and Central Europe to maintain the equilibrium, that there shouldn't be an explosion, which would be dangerous. If the situation shifts, it may swing over. These are the most important things that I can tell you.

William Phillips: Maybe one of our Hungarian friends would like to add something to what Dr. Hidas has said?

Judith Székács: It may be of interest for you to know that in the past two years book editions no longer are a state monopoly, and that a number of private editors have started a few minor journals. Now we have many publications in Budapest, and it is amazing. As I pointed out to a friend the other day, we would have felt uneasy even to read some of them five years ago. Now these books and publications are available and displayed in our corner bookshops. And quite a lot of reprints are back again in the bookstores; there are new enterprises, and young people are trying to speed up the publications process. Before, you handed in a manuscript and it got printed sometimes many years later. By the time it appeared, it might be outdated. So there are healthy aspects in what's going on.

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William Phillips: Mrs. Schwartz.
Joan Schwartz: Do you get all the journals you might want from other countries?
György Hidas: There has been a free flow since 1986, when, at the European conference in Budapest, you could buy foreign newspapers at newspaper stands. Not every newspaper stand has them; but you can buy, for example, *The International Herald Tribune, The New York Times,* and others. Yet they are very expensive. For example, you can buy a Hungarian journal for 1.80 forints, and you can buy *The International Herald Tribune* for 70 forints.
Abe Raskin: I'm sorry to say that I'm left a little confused as to the message. You have described the situation as potentially explosive: there apparently is a vacuum of authority; while the authority is still nominally there, it is not being exercised. There is, first of all, a dreadful economic situation, a great surge among the people for some real expression. What is the message we should get from this as to what we in the West can do to accelerate liberalization? And is it indeed an explosive situation, or is it better left alone, as you suggested in your closing remarks?
György Hidas: Well, the situation is confusing. And I don't have such a good overview of the whole situation. But I think, for example, that if the Hungarian government wishes for more and more joint ventures, Hungarian-American and so on, they have to change the bureaucratic measures which hinder such joint ventures. If they only pay lip service and say, "Okay, we will set up the joint ventures we need," and then they can't achieve them, there is a double bind. I think in such a case, the Chase Manhattan Bank, for instance, could say that they can't discuss anything until there is more than bureaucratic lip service.
Abe Raskin: Are you saying that the real progress for liberalization will come from joint ventures betokening the advent of capitalism?
György Hidas: Not quite. I say that you could object to this double bind; ask the government to be really open rather than indulge this double-talk.
Judith Székács: I don't know if I'm correctly recalling this story, so I ask the rest of us to help me out. You know the Soros Foundation was mentioned by Edith as one of the sponsoring agencies of our visit. The Soros Foundation has been something extraordinary in Hungarian cultural life during the last five years. You can apply for a grant at Soros as an institute or as an individual; you can work in scientific research or cultural studies; libraries are applying for

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equipment like xerox machines, typewriters, and videos. Individuals, such as writers, are applying to get grants for one year or two years: they can get a monthly stipend so as to be able to finish a book or research. It's a very, very wide-ranging thing. And as far as I know, there was a dispute because the Hungarians tried to obscure the picture about the foundation's support, why they got it and how the whole thing was administered. Soros demanded that all the conditions be openly publicized and that they really be clear. So they agreed that the Soros Foundation deserved a kind of autonomy, that it should decide, of course in agreement with the Hungarian Ministry of Culture, what it wants to fund.

György Hidas: You mean to say that others also should state that they are going to play the game only if there is openness. An important aim of the Soros Foundation is to foster an open society. Therefore, sponsoring oppositional intellectuals, who are deprived by the Party or government of the possibility of legal work, has priority.

William Phillips: You mean that people outside the country should put pressure on the government.

György Hidas: Yes.

Judith Székács: But it was a very friendly type of pressure, in this case.

Elizabeth Dalton: I was curious, or I was a little confused, when you said that there is no mastermind, there is no single power. Isn't the new president, Grósz, powerful?

György Hidas: It is not a question of power, it is a question of mind. In a very precarious, extreme situation you need an extraordinary mind. For the present, this is not a criticism only of Grósz, but holds true for the others. There is no group which has the necessary leadership qualitities. This is not just my opinion but also theirs.

Ivan Lust: This is a quote from Prime Minister Grósz. When he gave an interview upon coming back from Teheran, he said that it's the problem of the Politburo, and that there is no one strong enough and important enough to lead in this catastrophic situation, to get us out of this catastrophe. He stated it as a problem, not as something to be desired.

Joanna Rose: What was the view in Hungary of the American election?

György Hidas: We knew from correspondents in New York and Washington, and other places that there was no presidential candidate who was excellent. We read in our newspapers that, therefore, there was such a low turnout in the elections because people were apathetic, uninterested.

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William Phillips: You're saying America has the same problem as Hungary.
György Hidas: Hungary is now, somehow, an amazing country in a changing situation in the East.
Cynthia Colin: What are the young people thinking about and hoping for, what do they see as their way out?
Ivan Lust: I can't say that I'm competent to answer; I'm seeing only the disturbed young people. But I think young people are not very optimistic because they have no reason to be optimistic about the future. The possibilities of getting a job, an apartment, and so on, are poor. They are very pessimistic, and I think it's a very sad consequence of the past thirty or forty years that we have no illusions about politics and our leaders. Nobody, among young people, has illusions about authority.
Papp Laszlo: How does the political situation affect you? Not economically, but professionally, in terms of your practice or training. How is that a problem?
Gábor Szönyi: I think that in general, Hungarians today suffer from a feeling of low self-esteem. I conducted a survey among Hungarian psychoanalysts last summer, which pointed to general low self-esteem. I suppose that one reason for this feeling stems from the fact that there is no openness in Hungarian society, that we have no hope, so it's not uncommon to fear that things will go back or that we will be able to manage.
György Hidas: Alexander Mitscherlich wrote a book, *Society Without a Father*. We had an overpaternalistic societal leadership, which after 1945 said, "We are no longer your fathers," so that everybody felt abandoned. That is also a social psychological problem: people feel desolate and forlorn.
Joanna Rose: In Poland right now the Catholic Church is tremendously powerful, in a situation where people are feeling forlorn. It seems a logical time for religion to reassert itself. What is the situation of religion now in Hungary?
György Vikar: The relation between the Church and the political powers is now peaceful. The Church at first strongly resisted the Communist regime, but in the last years it has been neutral in the political arena.
William Phillips: Is it growing in power, in influence?
György Vikár: Yes. But it has less influence than in 1956. It is very interesting also that during the last years, the government has tried to use the church to solve problems which the Communist regime can-

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not solve, psychic problems of the youth, for instance, the drug problem, and so on. When the official organizations could not cope with these problems, the government tried to use the Church. As for the atmosphere in our profession, there we also can feel what Dr. Hidas said is characteristic of Hungary as a whole, and it is a paradoxical situation. That is, nobody really is optimistic, and yet people feel that rules which extended for decades now can be broken. And therefore it is perhaps with a kind of Don Quixotism that one writes about how to reform Hungarian psychiatry. That is something new in the latest issues of *Hungarian Psychiatry*, which are full of such articles. Thus one has a feeling that the Hungarian situation is a dance on the razor's edge. Rationally, one cannot have much hope for freedom, but now the government supports some new ideas and activities. Nobody knows the real meaning of this position.

Lionel Abel: What confuses me is this: You say that there's hopelessness and there are no illusions, and you also say there's an explosive situation. An explosive situation exists *only* when there are the conditions for a revolution, among which there must be belief in betterment. . . .

Judith Székács: Can't you be desperate?

Lionel Abel: No. I don't think so. I think that from what we have seen in this country in the black movement, the antiwar movement, and the feminist movement, the people in these movements had hopes.

William Phillips: Abel's point is that explosive situations exist only when people have some hope that their actions can produce some positive results. And if there is a situation without hope, Abel wonders in what way the situation could be explosive. At least, that has been the experience in the West. Judith says, however, that desperation can produce an explosive situation, by which I assume she means the situation in a country under Soviet domination is different.

György Vikár: Again I can say that there is some paradox in the Hungarian situation. Real desperation perhaps also can bring an explosion. But that is one side of the situation. The other side is that something happened during the last thirty years. In 1956 people didn't have cars and weekend houses. Now many do and fear they could lose them. So it is an explosive situation, when people who could create an explosion have a fear of losing what they have, even if they don't have much.

Lionel Abel: There is evidence that you get social movements when conditions improve, when people feel better. And it's not only when

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they have something they can lose, but when they have some enthusiasm for what they can get.

William Phillips: I think Abel is right about the American scene. But perhaps the situation in Hungary is different.

Ivan Lust: I think it's time to move to a joke about Hungary. It is an old joke, about taxes and salaries. The joke says that in Hungary you receive salaries as in Pakistan or Ethiopia and pay taxes as in Sweden. It gives no reason to be very optimistic about the future. But in spite of that, what is interesting in our spiritual situation, our intellectual situation is the following: everybody says that psychoanalysis is very sensitive to power and totalitarianism. You see that Freud's books were burned in the Third Reich, and his ideas were persecuted in the Soviet Union in the thirties and in Hungary in the fifties. When we look at the situation of the profession, we can say that we are no longer totalitarian because we are quite free to express our ideas, to give lectures, to teach psychology to medical students, and to propagate psychoanalytic ideas. All of us are strongly involved in some kind of teaching of psychotherapy, in universities and postgraduate training, and so on. It's relative freedom, and maybe this began in the seventies as a kind of faint reflection of the movement in Europe of 1968.

Judith Székács: I just want to add something: it started, as some philosophers said—paraphrasing the famous line from the *Communist Manifesto*, "The spirit of Communism swept over Europe"—when the spirit of Europe swept over Communism.

William Phillips: What is the basis of the hopelessness? Is the basis of the hopelessness, or whatever lack of hope exists, the fact that Hungary is not in control of its own fate? And that this complicates the situation and creates these ambiguities and paradoxes?

Ildikó Mohóczi: I came from Hungary after the revolution in 1956, so what is happening in Hungary reminds me a little of the spirit before 1956, when the revolution broke out and freedom of speech, freedom of the press was beginning. Not to such an extent as now, much less, but there was tremendous hope then, and there was no desperation whatsoever. And when the revolution broke out we were so happy; food came from the peasants, from the country, and was on the street. Shops were open, and nobody stole. It was an absolutely hopeful, ecstatic situation, and it lasted four days. The Russian tanks demolished part of Budapest, and we know what happened afterwards. So I think that the people who still remember these times have certain doubts about what is taking place now, because one

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never knows when the axe will fall. The spirit is there, but everybody knows that the power is on the other side, not where the spirit and where the enthusiasm are.

Milton Kapit: I'm curious about what goes on in the minds of both the analyst and the patient. Do they ignore the realistic situation?

Judith Székács: I don't know if this answers your question, but I remember two distinct situations during the past five years when I thought that doing real analytic work was impossible, and what I was doing was much closer to crisis intervention than anything else. One was in the weeks after Chernobyl, and the other was when the new taxation system was about to start: it was announced well in advance, and it meant that the standard of living would decrease by at least twenty percent, which is enormous. You know what that means. It was a very heavy taxation which never before had existed in Hungary, and people who were in enterprises had to work at lots of things because they felt their existence threatened. In Hungary, where big enterprises don't really exist, you have to think on a small scale. The intelligentsia and everyone else was affected. There was massive fear. So there are some periods when you feel you are in the middle of a great change.

Milton Kapit: What is the effect on psychoanalytic treatment?

Judith Székács: You have to deal with superficial situations as well. That's why it is crisis intervention. The fears the patient has presented are not only coming from his unconscious, but there is a very decisive element of reality that you have to deal with. How someone deals with reality is a psychological problem, and it concerns psychic reality as well. I don't say, "Don't worry, you will survive." But it changes the whole atmosphere.

Ivan Lust: In that situation, those of my patients who had enough strength were looking for more part-time jobs to pay the analytic fees.

Milton Kapit: One journalist recently commented that even though the society may be dictatorial, what the analyst does is try to obtain an inner view of the patient. I wonder whether that's really a possibility, considering the authoritarian nature of Eastern society, of Communist society.

György Hidas: I think that in my paper on factors allowing for the survival of psychoanalysis in Hungary, I didn't elaborate on the importance of psychoanalysis itself. But one does have the possibility with the help of psychoanalysis to enhance self-knowledge, to master one's own psychic reality, and in this way to become a bit more inde-

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pendent of the environment. Perhaps it is this value that has helped psychoanalysis to survive; perhaps that is what works against all dictorial and paternalistic influences. There is also a paradox, because sometimes the psychoanalyst is also paternalistic. If you read the "Dora" case, you can see how authoritarian Freud was.

Elizabeth Dalton: I didn't hear the paper yesterday, so I don't know if this was discussed. Has psychiatry been used, or is it now used, as it has been in the Soviet Union, to incarcerate dissidents?

György Hidas: In a very small way. After the '56 revolution very few people were mentioned as having been arrested. In 1980 or 1981 the Soviet Psychiatric Society was on the verge of being expelled from world psychiatry, and then decided to leave the World Psychiatric Society. That year, the president of the newly-founded Hungarian Psychiatric Society was elected as a vice president to the World Psychiatric Society. He accepted. He was a Communist Party member. You can see from this situation that it is very confused: he accepted the vice presidency of the World Psychiatric Society at the time that it was on the verge of condemning the Soviet Psychiatric Society. Now, the Soviet Psychiatric Society is again joining World Psychiatry, and Mr. Gorbachev says that we are liberating our society and are no longer what we call enemies or dissidents.

Marjorie Iseman: This is a two-part question, first, about remaining political prisoners. And second, about a citizen's relation with the police. For example, suppose demonstrators are threatened and roughened up by the police. Where could they complain about such treatment?

György Hidas: So far as I know, mostly through the Hungarian government and Amnesty International, there are very few political prisoners in Hungary, or none. Dr. Szönyi says there are twenty. As to being arrested, I don't know, I have never tried to demonstrate.

Marjorie Iseman: But in any situation, if you are mistreated by the police, do you have any recourse? With the new openness, is there any way to make the police accountable? Can you now take legal action against them?

György Hidas: I can. But I wouldn't try. I can't answer this question directly. I can say indirectly that if there are demonstrations, I am called to the station, and I bring a lawyer. If the police are arresting somebody, his lawyer has to be available to pick him up. That is one thing. The other is that under the present law about forming associations, you can appeal adverse decisions, and the state has to answer within a few days. And then begins a game, where they don't answer

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you. They don't go by the rules. Otherwise I agree with Dr. Szönyi.
Ivan Lust: You must know that there are an awful lot of jokes about the police in Hungary.
Judith Székács: These jokes about the police talk about how stupid they are, how they can't even count or read. One thing that would demonstrate how I feel about it is to compare them to the bobby in London. There, a child who is lost is told to go to the police, who will take him home. But I don't think that too many Hungarian children are encouraged, in case of trouble, to approach the police.
Helen Meyers: I got lost earlier. I've been wondering all along, do you think it's a good thing or a bad thing to have a fatherless society?
William Phillips: Who is the child?
György Hidas: It may be bad.
Helen Meyers: But we're not children.
György Hidas: I think people in a totalitarian state are, in some respects, children, and they ultimately lose their independence; they're not able to manage for themselves. I should add something about psychoanalysis: I think now we are free from censorship. Psychoanalysts can say and write what they want now. But we have lost our spirit, the psychoanalytic spirit for social criticism. Ferenczi wrote much about social questions. For instance, his first paper at the Salzburg Congress in 1908 was titled, "Psychoanalysis and Pedagogy." He believed in voicing his opinions. We lost that in Hungary, because we had to conserve our energy for survival. Now we have to rethink everything.
Abe Raskin: I was sorry that we did not get a comment from the panel on what seemed to me the central observation of the evening: that your hopelessness stems from the consciousness of Soviet power and memories of its brutal application in Budapest in 1956. Now that we're in an era of *glasnost*, to what extent is that fear as prevalent as it was, or conversely, is *glasnost* the shield that makes it possible to be even more fearful than one otherwise would be?
Ivan Lust: This is not a real answer, but I must correct you. I think our fate depends not only on the Soviet Union. What is bothersome in the situation is that our fate depends on two big forces, and that we are some kind of pawn in a power game. It's not only the game of the Soviets. It's a worldwide game.
György Hidas: I should add one thought: in Hungary, in the establishment and also among the population, there is anxiety about Gorbachev, because our fate is determined, not only by the Soviet armed forces but also by the existence of Gorbachev and on what

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Gorbachevism is. There are many posters of Gorbachev, saying, "Vote for Gorbachev. Pluralism is Gorbachev."

William Phillips: Let us adjourn and continue the discussion over coffee and dessert. I would like to thank Joanna and Dan Rose for their hospitality, and I would like to thank our Hungarian friends who have given us a more intimate sense of what goes on in Hungary than we get from *The New York Times.*

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Edith Kurzweil

HUNGARIAN AND AMERICAN PSYCHOANALYSIS

Psychoanalysis might not be what it is today if Freud had listened to Sandor Ferenczi rather that Karl Abraham, if he had focused more on "experiential" rather that "conceptual" understanding, and if he had not taken such a strong stand against the "neo-Hungarian," Melanie Klein. Had Freud agreed that children's early traumatic experiences might be as decisive as, or even more decisive than the Oedipus complex in mental development around the age of five years, psychoanalysis might have taken a totally different intellectual path.

This possibility was alluded to more than once during the first visit to the United States in over fifty years by Budapest Freudians, all of whom are members of the Hungarian psychoanalytic and medical establishments, at a conference on November 12, 1988—sponsored by the Columbia University Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research (CUCPT&R), *Partisan Review* and the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research. Of course, György Hidas, training analyst and the leading member of the Budapest Society for Psychoanalysis which was reestablished in 1980, reminded us that in 1926 Ferenczi himself had lectured at the New School, and I originally was able to interest the Columbia University psychoanalysts because their institute had been founded by yet another Hungarian, Sándor Radó. But the event proved to be more than an historical and emotional occasion: the seven Hungarians, who like all their compatriots cannot easily go abroad except when a grant facilitates an invitation, debated issues of psychoanalytic theory and history, clinical techniques and cases with America's leading psychoanalysts. And in their spare time, they took in New York—from Riverdale to Staten Island, Birdland to the Village Vanguard, Park Avenue splendor to Harlem squalor; they admired the treasures at most of our museums (so much better than reproductions); and they walked to admire our skyscrapers (so much larger and more imposing than in the movies). Their meetings with the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and with the psychoanalysts at the Austin Riggs Center, organized by Dr. Lewis Kirshner and introduced by Dr. Sanford Gifford, provided them with yet other ex-

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periences. Observing how moved they were when noticing what we take for granted, I too tended to see the Empire State Building and the Central Park Zoo with new, less jaded eyes, and to recall the early settlers as we walked on Commonwealth Avenue.

While questions of the Americans' Hungarian origins—however slight and remote—were played up throughout the conference in New York, the specifics of psychoanalytic practices and techniques were continually debated. The first morning speaker, introduced by Herbert Schlesinger of the CUCPT&R and Director of Clinical Training at the New School, was Lila Kalinich, another member of the Columbia contingent, who recalled the contributions of Hungarian theorists to American psychoanalysis. Then, György Hidas proceeded to tell the audience how it had been possible to keep psychoanalysis alive in a more or less totalitarian society, particularly after it had been outlawed for about thirty years.

Hidas began by reminding us that we cannot overlook the fact that Austria and Hungary shared a Kaiser and a common intellectual past. Sandor Ferenczi, for instance, studied medicine in Vienna; he published in the radical bourgeois journals *Huszadik Század* and *Szabadgondolat*; he lectured, among others, to the young radicals of the Galileo Circle—certain that psychoanalysis would have a liberating influence, would "bring a radical reform in the education of the human soul. . . [and] end the era of mankind characterized by hypocrisy, dogmas, the blind adoration of authority and the lack of self-criticism." The early Hungarian psychoanalysts also published in scientific journals such as the medical weekly *Gyógyászat*. Thus the physician István Hollos and the psychiatrist József Brenner (known as Géza Csáth) explored psychoanalytic methods only a few years after Freud's and Ferenczi's momentous meeting in 1908. And Hidas demonstrated that psychoanalytic history kept being swept along by political events: Ferenczi received the first Chair of Psychoanalysis at Budapest University after the revolution in 1918 and lost it, along with his membership in the Medical Society, a few months later; increasing anti-Semitism and antileftism led such Hungarian analysts as Franz Alexander, Jenö Hárnik, and Sándor Radó to emigrate. But those who stayed behind (among them Mihály Bálint, Alice Bálint, Imre Hermann, István Hollós, Géza Róheim, Lillian Rotter, Edit Gyömrói, and Robert Bak) created the so-called Budapest School of Psychoanalysis and its clinic on Mészaros Street.

In 1938, anti-Semitic, fascist legislation once more induced a large percentage of the psychoanalysts to emigrate. And in March

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1944, when the Nazis occupied Hungary, six of the twenty-six remaining Hungarian analysts and two of the eleven candidates died after having been deported to concentration camps. Between 1945 and 1948 there was a short-lived resurgence—led by Imre Hermann. But when the Communists came to power, psychoanalysis once again was declared an ideological enemy, the "domestic psychology of imperialism." The Association of Psychoanalysts disbanded, and such analysts as Endre Pető, Sára Balkányi and Vera Roboz left the country. Those who remained behind went underground: they worked as ordinary doctors and (most of them) adapted in order to survive.

After the armed uprising in 1956, the atmosphere gradually relaxed: some psychoanalysts met and were taught at Hermann's home: Lucy Lieberman (a disciple of Bálint) trained a team of child psychologists at the Medical School; Ferenc Merei, though not a psychoanalyst, expected his psychology students to be analyzed. And interest in psychoanalysis by health care personnel who had to deal with problems due to social adaptation, among these an inordinately high rate of suicide, kept growing.

By the early 1970s, Hungarian psychoanalysts had regularized relations with the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA). Not until 1980, however, were attacks on the analysts on political grounds stopped. At that time, they were "exonerated": they were expected to work as doctors in clinics, and to set up private practices (where they also do training analyses) as "second jobs." By 1987, they managed to hold the first psychoanalytic congress since 1937. Hidas primarily credits the tenacity of Ferenczi's co-worker Hermann, and the fact that he always made sure to work with a team of five or six people, for the survival of psychoanalysis in his country—the only one behind the Iron Curtain where it did not go under.

Hermann, argued György Vikár convincingly, enlarged the conception of aggression and its links to anxiety by finding parallels between the instinctual life of human infants and of young apes—in expressions of eroticism, clinging to their mothers, and in the eventual "clinging from a distance" by loving. He found that aggression does not exist on its own but arises out of early frustrations of instincts, some of which are biologically determined—needs for clinging, clasping and grasping, the arrival of siblings, or lack of food. Vikar then illustrated how he himself had dealt with the pathological manifestastions of such early experiences in one of his patients, a twenty-two year-old man. And he went on to outline how Hermann

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had generalized from individual aggression to European anti-Semitism—by noting the parallel between apes' "grooming" behavior and the human separation trauma: the Central European nations—Austria, Germany, Hungary—suffered inordinate numbers of separations due to constantly changing borders imposed upon them, and then "turned the aggressive impulse acquired through these separation traumas into themselves." These nations, Hermann had held, managed to abreact the trauma by trying to "excommunicate the Jewish minority." Such a truncated summary, of course, cannot do justice to the complexity of either Hermann's or Vikar's argument. But the contention that aggressive impulses and destructive fantasies may be rooted in inhibited, early behavior, though accepted by all Freudians, appears to play a more central role in the Hungarians' work with patients.

Sara Klaniczáy, for instance, assumed inordinately strong repressed feelings of aggressions in a quiet, twelve year-old psychosomatic patient. By drawing him out through games and dramatizations of early memories, she was able to cure him. With this boy, as well as with a six year-old who had to learn to express and then limit his aggression, she found Hermann's theory of instinctual aggression invaluable.

Judith Székács told us about the impact of the Holocaust on the psychic life of a twenty-four year-old patient whose parents had been in concentration camps, and who had incorporated her family's conflicts, idealizations, and projections. In the East European existence and psychodynamics, stated Székács, where dreadful events, changing perceptions of values, fears of police, and massive destruction and hatred had become the norm, depersonalization and all sorts of ego disorders are bound to flourish. Thus, psychoanalysis, though forbidden, is needed.

Klára Ajkay elaborated on Ferenczi's methods, on his insistence that early trauma could be alleviated with the help of the countertransference (the analyst's emotional reaction to the patient). Rather than perceiving it as a negative component during the psychoanalytic process, demonstrated Ajkay, Ferenczi expected to put the dynamics of the countertransference, along with its interaction with the patient's transference, to therapeutic advantage. He emphasized the need for honesty and candidness; and he accepted what now are called narcissistic and borderline cases at a time these were thought uncurable. Thus Ajkay proved him to have been the first proponent of the object-relations approach to psychoanalytic treat-

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ment. (*The Clinical Diary of Sandor Ferenczi,* which has recently been published by Harvard University Press, corroborates her thesis.)

Ivan Lust spoke of the conflict in treating patients by means of Freud's fatherly "technique of reason" versus Ferenczi's motherly "technique of emotion." And he reported on two of his patients whose stubbornly recurring fantasies he had managed to penetrate by focusing on gestures, postures, and intonations—as Ferenczi would have done. In the process, he developed a strong countertransference which, in turn, helped him redirect a part of the analysis, and to create a new analytic framework.

When Gábor Szönyi found out he was coming to America, he assumed we all would want to know more about Hungarian psychoanalysts' feelings of professional identity in comparison to their colleagues in the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA). When he analyzed the questionnaires he had used to research this comparison (two-thirds of all analysts polled responded), he found that before 1945, and again between then and 1948 (due to an upswing), professional and personal self-esteem had been above average; that between 1948 and 1956 (during persecution) it had been exceedingly low; that between 1956 and 1975 (the time of secret training and efforts toward IPA acceptance) it had sunk even lower; and that official IPA recognition by 1980, and institutionalization by 1985, had not appreciably lifted the Hungarian analysts' self-esteem. Clearly, their professional lives were closely linked not only to specific political events but to their location within Hungarian medicine, itself closely controlled by the government.

Szönyi had touched on the presence of Big Brother. Consequently, many of the questions by the American panelists and by the audience centered on psychoanalytic practice in a restrictive environment. Ethel Person, the Director of CUCPT&R, wondered why Szönyi had not separated the period under the Nazis, why he had underplayed it. And how, she asked of Roy Schafer (CUCPT&R) do you handle transference and countertransference in a situation where persecutory aspects of governmental and other conditions might be invoked by the analysand by means of accusations? Does such a situation lead you to proceed somewhat too cautiously? Ildikó Mohácsi, a psychoanalyst and 1956 emigré, responded by describing the dilemma of a hospital patient she had had in Hungary, a worker who was under so much pressure at his job, and who harbored so much hatred, that he suffered from psychosomatic symptoms but was afraid to talk. Paul Ornstein, a former Hungarian and

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now a Cincinnati psychiatrist and Freudian, pursued the question by wondering how an analyst in a totalitarian society can possibly analyze his patient's problems with authority while this same authority is looking over his own shoulder. After a few lively exchanges among the Hungarians, who talked of the personal ways in which anxiety and reality are experienced in the social and political realm, Helen Meyers observed that, basically, there are three levels of responses to fears. The first level is exemplified by the therapists in the Göring Institute who claimed to do analysis but did not—in direct reaction to their fear. On the second level, the fear is more subtle and is bound to influence the conduct of the analysis, what things you deal with, the way you analyze and approach them. On the third level, some things, such as a patient's wish to leave the country, might seem natural due to a shared value system, and this would provide an even subtler reason for keeping it out of the analysis.

The Hungarian visitors answered many questions about their own links to their country's history, to literary and cultural events. Then Otto Kernberg, of the Columbia Center and the foremost proponent of object-relations theory, wanted to know whether our visitors were in touch with the ideas of, for instance, the American Margaret Mahler and the Parisian analyst Belá Grunberger—who took seriously Ferenczi's concepts about the importance of the womb and of narcissism—rather than only with those of Michael Balint of London, whom they had mentioned. Judith Székács responded that, in essence, she and her colleagues focus on continuity of identity rather than narcissism, at least for the moment—to better understand internal conflict. Although Grunberger was in Hungary and talked about narcissism, said Hidas, he is not considered as close as Robert Bak and Balint are to the Hungarian School of Psychoanalysis. More questions followed about the psychoanalysts' relations to the medical profession, their insertion in hospitals and residency programs where they work with biologically disturbed patients, and the connections to the bureaucracy. "Most of our work is in hospitals," stated Ivan Lust, "so we normally start with official support." The last questions during this session had to do with the low rates of analysts' fees, and their location in the social, professional and political realms.

During the afternoon, when Helen Meyers chaired and the Americans led the dialogue, the focus was on psychoanalytic issues alone. The night before the meeting, Meyers had presented the

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Hungarians with a brilliant summary of the major directions in American psychoanalysis, the splits that had occurred during the last four to five decades, and particularly the controversies within and about ego psychology. Now Meyers, upon introducing the panel of distinguished analysts—Arnold Cooper, Otto Kernberg, Paulina Kernberg, Paul Ornstein, and Roy Schafer—informed the audience that they would hear of the current concerns and debates at the "cutting edge" of psychoanalysis; and that some of these, about the emotional bond between mother and infant and about object relations theory, had been foreshadowed by the Budapest School.

Arnold Cooper outlined the accepted Freudian paradigms and why and by whom these had been called into question. He suggested that American analysts reexamine their thinking in line with the new pluralism and the desirable "crisis of confidence" (in ego psychology)—due to the recent focus on the roles of narcissism and masochism in pathology, which also required giving up the centrality of the Oedipus complex in neurogenesis. Roy Schafer discussed the rules of psychoanalytic techniques—advisory rather than compulsory, guiding rather than prohibiting, supportive rather than threatening, and the importance of working with the analysand's experience of the past and the present. And he went on to focus on the psychoanalytic dialogue, on the specific language between the analyst and the patient, and on the delicate judgements the analyst must make. By recounting the case of a man whose mood improved—thanks to a specific insight—Schafer invited the participants to discuss how they might have handled the situation. Otto Kernberg started out by defining and contrasting the British, the ego psychologists', and the "culturalists' " views of object relations—in terms of how they conceptualize motivation, structure, and clinical techniques. He then proceeded to explain his own approach, which not only is said to incorporate the most valuable aspects of each, but focuses on the importance of affects in borderline and narcissistic disorders. Kernberg listed Heinz Kohut, known for his theory of self-psychology, among the culturalists because, I assume, of his stress on the analyst's emphatic listening position and its interpretive mode of intervention. Paul Ornstein elaborated on clinical observations that support such techniques in that they increase a patient's self-cohesion and thus make defensive operations less necessary. Furthermore, he explained Kohut's simultaneous exploration of external and internal reality as a means of research. Paulina Kernberg talked of the difficulties facing child analysts—lack of training facilities, social and

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economic factors—and reminded us that observation of children, their early language behavior and their physical symptoms rather than reliance on "developmental phases," had led to new knowledge about adults. And she pointed to the various influences of psychoanalysis on child psychiatry, particularly in her emphasis on a humanistic, subjective approach.

By the time Paulina Kernberg finished, members in the audience, and particularly the Hungarians, were bursting with questions. How do you implement these very abstract theories, they kept asking in one way or another. Otto Kernberg then elaborated on the differences between interpretations to a patient "in the here and now" at the level of his/her understanding and conceptualizations of psychic processes; and he illustrated his points with cases, with how he had drawn on his own emotions in order to experience those of his patients. He, Arnold Cooper, and Paul Ornstein had some repartee about self-psychology and drew a few laughs. Ivan Lust recounted how he had been shaken up by the traumatic memories of one of his patients and had re-experienced some of these emotions at this very meeting while reporting the case; and he quoted the German analyst, Hermann Argelander, for whom the psychoanalytic dialogue is a "search together" that makes for a specific type of closeness. After another round of heated exchanges on clinical practices, and after Helen Meyers had reminded everyone that, ultimately, an analyst's response to a patient comes out of his/her own early, archaic experience, the meeting ended.

At that point, György Hidas thanked everyone for the emotional experience the Hungarians had just gone through. He was sure now, he asserted, that he and his colleagues were more "feudal" than they had been aware of. However, he did not seem to realize that part of the general audience at the New School—people who as a rule don't get to listen to psychoanalysts' professional discussions, or to their doubts, who think of them either as clairvoyant or passé—was fascinated by the unexpected and invaluable insights into the psyches of today's most prestigious American Freudians.

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Sidney Hook

CURRICULAR POLITICS

We are in a new phase of educational change inspired by developments in minority and feminist militancy in the last few years. As American higher education has progressively abandoned institutional obstacles to universal access to higher education flowing from racial, sexual, and national differences, demands have increased that the nature of the educational experience itself reflect the very differences that liberal education has sought to transcend. The new movement has announced its opposition to the very concept of Western Culture as inherently infected with racial, sexual, and imperialistic prejudice. At Stanford University under the leadership of the Black Student Union and a few sympathetic faculty members, its famous course in Western Culture—the only one required of all students and heralded for a decade by the students themselves as a high point in their educational experience—has been abolished, and a new course in Ideas, Values, and Tradition has been substituted. In many other universities curricular changes have been proposed, some under the same slogans against racism, sexism, and imperialism, and others under the quest for a vague, ill-defined pluralism or diversity.

The reaction in the larger community to the changes at Stanford and elsewhere was not long in coming. There was surprise, outrage, ridicule, and incomprehension in many scholarly quarters, and a spirited defense among the organized ethnic campus groups, especially from university administrators who have the burden of explaining the changes to bewildered alumni, parents, and public.

Since the proposed new courses are not yet completely in place, it is still too early to determine what is being proposed in lieu of the courses in Western Culture. Are the new courses, for example, providing the unified (not uniform) common educational experience that liberal arts colleges in the past have prided themselves on? One definite advantage of the controversy, it is to be hoped, is to make faculty members aware of their role and responsibility as educators rather than as specialists of a narrow discipline unrelated to the goals and meaning of a liberal education. Unfortunately, so far many have taken the stance of risk-free observation, somewhat like civilians fearful of getting too close to the battle lines. Others, who think

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of themselves as realists, fall back on the misapplied metaphor of "the bottom line," and assess curricular changes primarily on their likely vocational effects on their department.

The first observation that comes to mind on the basis of the materials so far made available is the uncertainty in the minds of the architects of the new program at Stanford as to the actual nature of the contemplated curricular change. On the one hand, the claim was repeatedly made that the change was fundamental or, as the headlined story of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* put it in a recent issue (December 14, 1988), "sweeping" and "monumental." And indeed, the leaders of the Black and Chicano students and a scattering of faculty originally demanded a radical transformation of the course in Western Culture and the abolition of the entire core list of readings that constituted the skeletal structure of the course. They didn't get their way on this point. Not all the fifteen basic texts were abolished: They were reduced to six.

On the other hand, we hear voices in defense of the new course assuring us that there is no need for alarm and disquiet. The fact that six volumes of the old Western Culture course have been retained for study by all eight tracks or divisions of the basic new course has been cited by those who wish to downplay the magnitude of the change and to combat the impression that Western Culture has been "trashed" at Stanford. They assert that the changes have been moderate and evolutionary, and they reassure startled parents and alumni that all the critical comments by William Bennett, Allan Bloom, and others are demagogic exaggerations. The administration has poured great quantities of this soothing oil on the troubled waters of public opinion.

But there obviously has been a lack of candor in both responses. For the truly sweeping and monumental change is the fact that the entire *orientation* of the old course in Western Culture has been altered. The new course specifies that the curriculum of all the tracks begining in the fall quarter be oriented towards "race," "sex," and "class." *If* the new course carries out the sense of the motion as it was understood by its most enthusiastic adherents among the minority students and faculty, it will be, among other things, a comprehensive, diluted course in social studies dedicated to the appreciation of the contributions and systematic oppressions of racial minorities, women, and working masses in history, past and present, in all cultures studied, especially Western culture.

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If it were not for this reorientation towards race, sex, and class, the claim that changes in the basic curriculum were "sweeping" or "monumental" would be transparently disingenuous. For in the natural course of events changes in the core curriculum of Western Culture have been made from time to time. Without changing the structure of the course in Western Culture, great works by women and people of color could easily have been incorporated. Indeed, in many courses in Western Culture on other campuses this is actually the case or about to be done.

I cite as an example of this the curriculum of the proposed Humanities Core Curriculum: "The Making of the Modern World" of Boston University, in which at key points *The Analects of Confucius*, the *Tao Te Ching* of Lao Tzu, the *Bhagavadgītā*, the *Koran*, the place of women in Greek and Roman society are examined. Many other illustrations from the recent past in the curriculum of American colleges can be cited. It required no great revolution in the curriculum of Stanford's Western Culture course to incorporate any educationally reasonable proposal for readings from different cultures at points of intersection or diffusion between them.

For the current year (1988-89) at Stanford, only one track out of eight tracks, "Europe and the Americas," presages the changes that are to be introduced in the fall of 1989. Although all the tracks will gradually be modified along the lines mandated by the change from the old Western Culture program to the new CIV program (Culture, Ideas, Values), only the "Europe and the Americas" track has been described as departing "fairly significantly from the prevailing pattern" of the past. It may or may not be a reliable indication of how the other tracks will evolve. Since it is the only one available, it may be instructive to look more closely at this particular track as a possible guide to what to adopt or to avoid in constructing curricula.

I list the required readings of the Fall quarter of 1988 in the order in which they were scheduled to be studied:

Augustine's *Confessions*
Son of Old Man Hat: A Navaho Autobiography
Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*
Marx, *Communist Manifesto*
Weber: *The Protestant Ethic*
Melville: *Bartleby*
Selections from the *Old Testament* (*Genesis*) and *New* (*Revelations*)
Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

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Paredes, *With His Pistol in His Hand*
Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*
Rulfe, *The Burning Plain and Other Stories*
Popul-Vuh, *Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life*
Burgos-Debray, *I . . . Rigoberto Manchu*
Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*

Two odd things are striking about this list: both its unhistorical order and its content. Freud and Marx are read before the Bible, and Fanon's tract and paean of praise for revolutionary violence, intelligible in understanding the reactions to African colonialism in the twentieth century, is read as if it had an important historical bearing on the diffusion of cultures or the impact of Europe on early American civilizations. One of the great weaknesses of courses in general education is the neglect of chronology. Ideas have histories. And although they can and should be considered analytically, their cultural impact cannot be grasped without attention to the historical context.

Even more dubious is it to regard some minor works that may rate a place on a collateral reading list as having the status of works by Augustine and Marx. The rationalization for this mishmash is that a thematic approach is being taken and that the course is a study of the development of selves—starting with Conventions of Selfhood, then Labor and the Social Self, Making Other Cultural Selves, Forging Revolutionary Selves, and ending with a one-day study of Urban Selves Today. Suddenly the course has been transformed into one of social psychology! The architects of the course are out of their depths. They began with a study of Conventions of Selfhood, but there is no such thing. Every conventional self presupposes a definite culture and history. Aside from biological and psychophysical phenomena like the study of afterimages, there is no such thing as *the* self invariant at all times and all cultures. Even our dreams reflect our cultures. Instead of using Freud's *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* in the first rubric of the course, his *Civilization and Its Discontents* would be far more relevant, as would selected pages from Augustine's *City of God* rather than his *Confessions*. This thematic approach cannot be taken seriously, if intended as such, for even a thematic approach, in order to do justice to our own time, is best approached historically. It is a most dubious anthropological excursion to assume that the symbolic meanings of subconscious life are cultur-

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ally invariant. It also ignores the dispute over the scientific validity of the entire psychoanalytic approach and the virtues of Freud's literary and mythopoetic works.

The most conspicuous of the readings elevated to a classic worthy of detailed study in this course is obviously Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. It has truly become a classic among third-world terrorist guerilla groups. It preaches revolutionary terror and force without limit against colonialists and all native elements supporting them, and against any independent native party that proposes peaceful solutions. It is not enough that colonial peoples achieve their independence, according to Fanon. That liberation, to be genuine, must and can only be achieved by violence. One must not shrink from the hecatombs of victims that result from violence because they indicate that "between oppressors and oppressed everything can be solved by force." Fanon believes this literally—even the economic problems at the basis of colonialism can be solved by the creative potential of force. The basket case economies of countries liberated by violence—even of countries never occupied by colonialists—are of course a legacy of colonial terror on this hysterical view.

Some persons have been shocked by the appearance of Fanon's book on the required reading list because of its rhetorical incitement to blood lust. This reaction is misguided. True, it is a very bad book. But one of the limitations of Great Books courses is the absence of the study of some very bad books that have had momentous historical significance, like Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Pedagogically one of the best preparations for membership in a liberal society is familiarity with the mixture of sophisms, fable, distorted fact, and self-sacrificial mindless fanaticism that constitutes so much of the literature of the political, religious and racial totalitarian doctrines of the modern age. If time permits, error should be confronted and countered even in its most persuasive form.

What is scandalous is not the appearance of Fanon's jeremiad on this list but the absence of any replies to the cult of violence. Let the students read Fanon but also Gandhi, if not Gandhi then Martin Luther King, or the most powerful of all voices in behalf of nonviolence, Leo Tolstoy. It is not that they are free of legitimate criticism, but they make an effective intellectual reply to Fanon. Even when the opposite of an error is itself an error if absolutized, both errors are not *equally* in error or equally mischievous in their end effects. I am assuming of course that as educators we are pri-

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marily interested in stimulating or clarifying the minds of our students and not in stirring them into some sort of political action.

These general considerations apply to the study of imperialism, too, of whose many evils students should be well aware. But is, or was, imperialism an absolute evil at all times and in every respect? Did the culture and economy of the imperial power in addition to its cruelties ever make a positive contribution to the health, standard of living, and public order of the region it ruthlessly exploited? There are several schools of thought here. But one school of thought, whose most notable representative is Lord Peter Bauer, is never discussed. The works of Bauer and his school are never listed in the bibliography of courses in Black Studies, Chicano Studies, or in any of the tracks of the old course in Western Culture or the new course in CIV in which reference to colonialism is made. Nor are the writings of other foremost scholars of imperialism like Stanford's Lewis Gann or Peter Duignan ever listed, although occasionally they are orally denounced. Members of this school are not apologists of imperialism: some of them even believe that colonialism was sometimes a bad economic investment. But they argue that not all the present-day economic evils of decolonized states are due to colonialism, that some of the worst economic problems today are found in states that were never colonized.

Right or wrong, it is a view that merits discussion. For the view that colonialism had some progressive features was held, among others, by none other that Karl Marx who wrote some years after he published the *Communist Manifesto* that India owed its only social revolution in 1,500 years to British imperialism. I suspect that many at Stanford and elsewhere who regard themselves as Marxists will suspect the authenticity of my quotation (as did Jawaharlal Nehru) although it follows strictly from Marx's own theory of history and economics. The passage I refer to reflects the stigmata of racism with which Marx himself unfortunately was personally afflicted, and Engels even more. But it does not affect the point he is making.

To be sure, Marx is unsparing in his criticism of the needless cruelties of the British subjection of India. But he is just as unsparing in his eloquent account of the still greater infamies to which the British put an end. He mentions the "small semi-barbarian, semi-civilized communities" that were destroyed by "the greatest, and to speak the truth, the only social revolution ever heard of in Asia," and then goes on:

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> . . . .[W]e must not forget that these idyllic village-communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies. . . .
>
> . . . We must not forget that these little communities were contaminated by distinctions of caste and by slavery, that they subjugated man to external circumstances instead of elevating man the sovereign of circumstances, that they transformed a self-developing social state into never-changing natural destiny. . . .
>
> . . . England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindustan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in its manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfill its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England, it was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution.[1]

As usual Marx overstates his case. Right about the pervasive effects of the mode of economic production on a culture, he ignored the reciprocal influence of a number of other irreducible factors on the alleged economic base, although giving lip acknowledgment to their presence. The man who said that the workers had no fatherland disbelieved the evidence of his own century, and died before the intensifying nationalisms (as well as the economic conflicts) of the early twentieth century led to what more fittingly can be called the Second Fall of Man, World War I, than any other historical event. Marx ignored all the psychological forces of pride, tradition, cultural autonomy that may lead people to resist modernization and Westernization. One may wonder if the fetish of national independence was worth the nine million lives lost in consequences of the departure of the British Raj, and cite the complaints of the Sikhs, Moslems, Sinhalese, Tamil minority ethnic groups today, that they are less safe in their lives and prosperity since the British left. It would still not serve as a justification for imperial rule imposed on a people that does not want it. Perhaps the best answer to Marx's tribute to

1. Karl Marx, *New York Daily Tribune*, June 25, 1953. From *The Collected Works of Marx & Engels*, Volume 12 (London and Moscow: Lawrence and Wishart).

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the progressive character of British rule was made by an Indian patriot and jurist addressing his British colleagues:

> Yes, you gave us law and justice, roads, public hygiene and hospitals, museums, parks and much else. But you took away what we now value much more, our sense of self-respect.

It is not necessary to pursue the question any further here to determine whether this value was always indigenous to Indian culture or whether it, too, had been imbibed from the Western tradition. If its roots were truly native to the local culture, why had it taken so long to come to flower under British rule? It is sufficient to develop a sense of historical sophistication among students so that they realize that the moral imperatives of our own time cannot be automatically applied outside the specific historical context that limit the viable political and cultural possibilities of the past. One may recite the much misunderstood phrase of Marx about changing the present world instead of interpreting it. But Marx would have scorned the idea that the past could ever be changed by present day moral edicts or interpretations. Not even God can change the past!

Almost all of the old courses in Western Culture or Civilization or the new courses proposed to replace them list Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto* as a core text. And this is as it should be. Without an understanding of the theory and practice of Marxism and the history of movements allegedly based on it, the modern age and culture would be no more intelligible than the Middle Ages without a knowledge of Christianity. Presumably when the student sections are oriented to the study of "class" in the analysis of ideas, values, and traditions, the *Communist Manifesto* and other writings will throw some light on it. But as valuable as his insights are, Marx's theory of class is the weakest aspect of his sociological analysis. Only his theory of economic value is weaker. To evaluate Marx and his claims properly—and scientifically as he hoped they would be—would require at least some familiarity with the writings of his critics—classical, Keynesian, Hayekian. Students are and should be required to read Marx. But should not a supplementary reading list contain *suggestions* of some works critical of Marx? I do not know what is the case with other tracks of the new Stanford CIV course, but there is not a single work critical of Marx listed in the "Europe and the Americas" track.

After all, history itself has been guilty of *lèse-Marxism*! Capitalism for all its recurrent crises has not collapsed. Its working class has

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not been pauperized. Marx never anticipated the rise of totalitarianism either in its Fascist or Stalinist form. The first attempt at a Socialist revolution came not where he expected it but where his own theory of historical materialism asserted it was impossible. He himself had declared in *Die Deutsche Ideologie*, in the very year that he became a Marxist, that a high degree of "development of productive forces . . . is an absolutely necessary practical premise [of communism] because without it, privation, *want* is merely made general, and with *want* the struggle for necessities would begin again, and all the old shitty business would be restored."[2] And as if to prove him right on this point, the very countries, the Soviet Union and China, which in defiance of his predictions, socialized their economies, are now jettisoning collectivist principles, while retaining the Leninist state, a perversion of the Marxist ideal which never envisaged the absolute dictatorship of a minority party based on brutal force as an expression of a democratic, socialist commonwealth.

Indoctrination is a process of teaching through which acceptance of belief is induced by nonrational or irrational means, or both. It may be unavoidable when teaching very young children who must acquire certain social habits before they are mature enough to understand their justification. But it has no place whatsoever in the curriculum of a liberal arts college. Any course of study that does not consider, where relevant, dissenting views where matters of opinion are involved, especially in the fields of the humanities and social studies, is an exercise in indoctrination, and often undisguised. That is the source of so much pedagogical concern and, except among partisan and fanatical elements, on many campuses intelligent student rejection of Black Studies, Feminist Studies, Chicano Studies, etc., in which only one position is heard on controversial issues about which reasonable men and women may differ. Whoever heard of a teacher in Black Studies who does not believe in *total* divestment of American corporation holdings in South Africa, regardless of its effects on the local black population, or who agrees with the Zulu chief Buthelezi, spokesman for a considerable portion, if not a majority, of the black population? Whoever has heard of an antifeminist or of someone who agrees with Eleanor Roosevelt's opinion of the Equal Rights Amendment teaching in Women's Studies? Or a teacher of Chicano Studies who dares to agree with American policy in Salvador, Nicaragua, or even Gre-

2. Ibid., Volume 5, p. 49.

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nada? So long as these studies are elective or voluntary, their fallout affects those who have surrendered their minds to them. But if the content and method of these studies are smuggled into the required courses, this constitutes an outrageous betrayal of the liberal tradition. We are already hearing complaints that there are not enough teachers available to discuss these questions in a scholarly way, coupled with the preposterous notion that those qualified to teach the great works of Western Culture are incapable of mastering the relevant materials on these themes, and that therefore the teaching staff must be expanded to bring in persons specially qualified by race, sex, or class to present themes in these areas sympathetically.

Such views are sometimes heard even among those who imagine that they are Marxists of sorts in the fields of comparative literature or literary criticism, in which deconstructionist dogmas about "the myth of objectivity" give them license to take any liberties with texts or verifiable events. One almost feels sorry for poor Marx because of those who invoke his name. Marx naively believed that his position rested on historical evidence. His was intended to be an empirical view. To be scientifically credible it had to be refutable, that is, stand the test of experience. Marx had left the irresponsible voluntarism, revived by twentieth-century existentialism, behind him with the swaddling clothes of his idealistic Hegelianism, which now reappears in the patched-up garments of the Frankfurt school.

We hear a great deal these days of the *Marxisant* allegiance of university faculties in the humanities and social studies, especially among the not insubstantial number who were activist students in the sixties. Because of the collapse of rigorous standard of scholarship, these activists have survived as tenured teachers in the institutions they once sought to destroy. Once scholars have won their professional spurs, they have as much right to be Marxists as Straussians or Thomists or what not. There are good and bad among all these schools of thought. But the astonishing thing is the degree to which those who pretend to, or profess, a Marxist orientation interpret Marxism not as a scholarly scientific approach but as a *commitment* to a variety of political causes. The chief component of this commitment is opposition to American foreign policy whenever it involves a conflict in third world countries or with the Soviet Union and its satellites. What they expound as Marxism is a blatant variety of vulgar Marxism, which is more Benthamite than Marxist, or a form of pseudo-Marxism in which there is no distinction between the causal efficacy of "the foundations" and "superstructure" of culture,

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and Marx's materialism disappears in an eclectic melange—the *Quatch mit Tunke!* of dialectic totalism.

All this may appear peripheral to the problems of curricular construction and evaluation. But it is not. The future of Stanford's only required course depends on whether the obvious political bias and indoctrination in the track on Europe and the Americas is to be reflected in the other tracks. The current year is supposed to be transitional and, as in the past, changes normally would be made in the course of events. The disquietude generated by the course on Europe and the Americas was natural because of the publicity it received in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and elsewhere. The changes in no other track have been so widely heralded. Taken together with the Stanford Senate's mandate that the concepts of race, sex, and class are to be stressed, and the explicit provision that books written by women and persons of color are to be added to the required reading list while nine of the fifteen core readings are to be dropped, it was inevitable that the academic community be alarmed. That alarm may contribute to the sobriety and reflectiveness of further developments at Stanford.

There is one great danger not properly faced in any institution where, as at Stanford, a course of study, devised to provide a common unitary educational experience for all students, is presented in different sections or tracks that reflect the specialized interests students bring *to* the course, rather than allow their intellectual interests to develop *out* of the course. The great danger is that, despite the fact that the core curriculum of readings is the same for all sections or tracks, in actuality the students are really taking different courses. The danger is intensified when each section or track can require different supplementary readings. (In a sense it is even true that in almost every discipline the identical material taught by a brilliant imaginative teacher will result in a different course from one taught by a dull teacher who comes alive only in the laboratory, but there is no remedy for that).

For reasons that are quite understandable in the absence of details (certainly not the fault of critics), some of the doubts about the shortcomings of the CIV course may appear unfounded. Dante will not be read in the Europe and the Americas track, but he may or may not be read in one or another of the seven other tracks.

On the other hand, some of the replies to critics fall back on the truism that times change and that even if the perennial questions of life remain the same, different books may suggest different answers.

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Replying to a critical editorial in *The Wall Street Journal*, the assistant dean of undergraduate studies at Stanford, an ardent advocate of the new program writes:

> For example, fifty years ago John Locke seemed indispensable in answering a question like "What Is Social Justice?" In 1989, with a more interdependent world order, a more heterogeneous domestic population, and mass media and communications systems that complicate our definitions of "society" and "individual," it may be that someone like Franz Fanon, a black Algerian psychoanalyst, will get us closer to the answer we need." (*Wall Street Journal*, January 6, 1989).

What a curious and irrelevant defense of the new program! The two most notable works of John Locke are his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and *Two Treatises on Government.* Neither is concerned centrally with social justice. The first is about the theory of knowledge, the second about the philosophical foundation of human rights, which should be more relevant to the human rights revolution of our times than any of the new works in the course. On the other hand, Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* has nothing to say about "social justice" or even about psychoanalysis. It is an eloquent tract inciting victims of colonialism to revolutionary violence. It does not treat seriously any of the complex social phenomena listed as bearing on the modern quest for social justice. If one were concerned with theories of social justice in 1989, one would normally require the study of excerpts from John Rawls's *Theory of Justice* and Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia* and from the writings of critics of the natural rights tradition Rawls and Nozick have brilliantly revived, rather than the study of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth.* And if, as the assistant dean writes, we are looking for works that "will get us closer to the answer we need," how does he know that the answer we need is a true or adequate answer? A purported answer to a question may meet our needs or hopes, but it may not be a true or adequate answer to the problem or question. A university is an institution that should study with critical care and understanding *all* proposed answers to the central questions and problems of our time. It cannot become a partisan advocate or agency of any proposed solution. That is the function of legislative bodies in our democracy.

A good case can be made for the view that the syllabus of one of the tracks in the old course in Western Culture could have served adequately for all the students enrolled in the course. For example,

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of all the syllabi I have seen, I would say that the Syllabus for Structured Liberal Education, modified to include an analysis of central concepts of science and scientific method as well as references to other cultures, could very well serve as a paradigm course for all students. But there is no need to make that choice now. What is necessary is to curb the great divergence among the different eight (some envisage ten) tracks that will try to implement the mandated changes. Otherwise, the upshot may well be a series of unrelated courses so different from each other that the whole notion of a common unitary educational experience will be defeated. This has happened before, and unless the engaged faculty keeps before it the ideals of a liberal arts education, it may happen again.

* * *

The basic educational or philosophical issue raised by reflections on curriculum building involves a larger question than the particular required course of study at Stanford or Boston Universities or anywhere else. It is whether we are to develop informed men and women capable of continuing their own education, with open minds, free of zealotry, aware of the challenges to their own first principles and yet confident in the validity of their own reflective choices, prepared to defend the principles of a free and liberal civilization against enemies from any quarter, and with the imaginative capacity to see the human being even in the enemy. Those so educated, in a world of tension and conflict, are more likely to adopt the policy of live and help live with others, and, failing that, the policy of live and let live.

The schools and universities are not the only educational agencies in society. In addition to the home, our economic, political, and cultural organizations have a pervasive educational influence, too. Unless they also reflect the basic values of democracy as a way of life, schools and universities cannot have much influence beyond their own precincts. Our hope should be that a proper educational experience will develop citizens with the knowledge, skills, and values required for intelligent action. This is in no way a defense of the status quo, because, as John Dewey used to say, literally in a world of change, there is no status quo. The influence of the past for good or bad is always present. It is the task of creative intelligence to use what is valid in the past and present to face and, it is to be hoped, determine the future.

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Lionel Abel

THE HERO OF METATHEATER

We speak of the "hero of tragedy" as if we had at hand some notion—clear or unclear—as to the kind of individual who becomes known to us in an action we can call "tragic"; in a work based essentially on the plays of Sophocles, Bernard Knox has even characterized such individuals as being of "heroic temper." I like Mr. Knox's term; it correctly describes those figures who satisfy us with the attitude they take when resolved to act at the cost of suffering. If they do not altogether satisfy us in this respect—certain characters of plays known to us as tragedies do not—by this fact alone they cast doubt on the nature of the drama which shows them forth.[1] It has been alleged that the dramas they appear in—however catastrophic, however designated by the author—are not "true" tragedies.

Now it has been my claim that there is a form of drama distinctive enough to be characterized as "metatheater."[2] Can it also be said that a particular type of individual may be singled out as the likely or even paradigmatic protagonist in such a dramatic work?

But let me first of all ask this: can the heroes of metatheater—assuming there to be such—be said to have the same *temper* as heroes of tragedy? My answer: they may or may not have the qualities claimed for the heroes of tragedy, which brings me to the question I have been leading up to all along: What are the qualities which a character *has* to possess to be a hero of metatheater?

I have chosen as my paradigmatic metatheatrical figure not a character from some work written for the stage, but one taken from a novel, the first of its kind, and written by a novelist who had previously failed as a playwright. I have chosen Don Quixote to represent the character traits especially *appropriate* to the metatheatrical hero, as well as those which are *essential* to him.

What is essential for the hero of metatheater is that he be conscious of the part he himself plays in constructing the drama that unfolds around him. He may, like Don Quixote, have foisted on the scene the action in which he is caught, and in which he can no more hope to be successful than if he had been thrust into it against his

1. Hamlet, for example.
2. See my book *Metatheater* (New York: Hill and Wang), 1963.

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will. Hamlet, it will be remembered, was so thrust by his father's ghost. Hamlet, of course, did not himself invent the circumstance in which he was entangled, though at times he suspects himself of having done so. Swinging counterweight, Don Quixote has actually chosen to be caught in the circumstance he imagines he is in. He wants to fight a giant, the windmill promptly becomes one, and he spurs Rosinante to charge the giant he has postulated to be there. Is he mad? To be sure. But his madness, like Hamlet's, has method to it. . . .

The value to a playwright of such a character is that he is capable of inserting himself into a plot without ever consulting his author. The six characters of Pirandello's masterpiece tell the stage manager they accost that they are in search of an author, but once on stage and given a chance to enact their roles, show that they do not need an author at all. Released on the stage they commence to live—at the risk of life itself. Their belief is that "the play is the thing," whatever its outcome for them.

The individual of heroic temper is, as Bernard Knox has indicated, *undaunted*. Now the hero of metatheater is not necessarily that firm. He would not say like "the undaunted daughter of desire" that "it kills me not to die for thee." The hero of one remarkable work of metatheater, Prince Frederick of Homburg, is so dominated by fear that at one point he rejects the woman he loves and even suggests that she marry another of her suitors if in this way he may escape death. He is certainly unqualified to be the hero of a tragedy, as the Prussian militarists were quick to point out. After a single exhibition of cowardice, they said, one can no more be a hero than a woman once seduced can be called "pure." Let me add that even the quite fearless Cyrano yields, if not to the force, position, or skill of another, yet to the shame he feels for part of his own body, his too prominent nose. Thus he volunteers to help his rival Christian, instead of boldly speaking to Roxanne of his love for her. Is Hamlet undaunted? How could he be, weakened by doubt as to his mother's role in his father's murder and by his loss of faith in womanly virtue? There are all sorts of critics who have labored to transform Shakespeare's hero into one more appropriate to tragedy, but such efforts fail to convince. It is time to see them for what they are: obstinate refusals to desist from the shallow reading of an ever enigmatic and ever revealing play. . . .

But is not Don Quixote undaunted in his persevering effort to be a knight errant in a world which rejects his efforts as mad? My

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answer is that he has moments when he recognizes his efforts for what they are, as in the wonderful scene which Nabokov in his splendid book on the knight has singled out for praise. Sancho Panza has gone off to administer the island procured for him, and over which he expects to rule, and Don Quixote now has a countenance especially mournful, recognizing that he is old, alone, poor and out of his mind. . . . Undaunted, nevertheless. . . .

Another Russian writer, the literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, has stressed the importance of Cervantes's novel, which he has assimilated—I myself would not—to the Rabelaisian novel. I am struck by the fact that the two great Russians, the novelist and the theorist of the novel, have given such importance to the book of Cervantes, Nabokov emphasizing in the work he devoted to it the aesthetic strengths and weaknesses of the book, while recognizing that its greatness is based on the quality of its main character. Bakhtin, for his part, saw something of equal importance which Nabokov characteristically missed, by which I mean he *set out to miss it*; for he was interested exclusively in aesthetic qualities, and against giving, or recognizing any necessity to give, any credit for insight that might be called *moral*. And Bakhtin? He took the very opposite view. In an early essay on form and content, he made it clear that we can get something important from novels which we can no longer get, or even expect to get, from moral philosophy, namely, a moral explanation and judgment of experience. For philosophers no longer feel able to defend the moral views they happen to hold. Can the novelist? Not cognitively, but aesthetically. Dostoevsky does not have to supply an argument to prove Prince Myshkin's goodness to us; we know this as simply as we know gold from lead, as we know the goodness of Don Quixote, which in fact inspired Dostoevsky to create Prince Myshkin, and Unamuno to write a book entitled *Our Lord Don Quixote*. That vindication of the morally good which Bakhtin points out can no longer be made in the language of philosophy indeed can be made in literature, and to the handful of writers who are able to do this, readers and critics have spontaneously accorded the respect formerly reserved for moral philosophers.

It is still the case that we cannot defend cognitively what we support morally. Surely our relationship to the good is fantastic, being inextricably connected—as Jaspers pointed out—with our inability to demonstrate its rightness. Who then could better represent

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our relationship to the good than one who can represent the Ought which is not discoverable in all that it can be said Is? Cervantes's hero has the quality of a goodness as evident as it is unprovable, and of a goodness that is not confined to the aid which may be offered one person by another. This knight errant has also set himself to address wrongs in the social order to which he belongs, and in the natural world as well. He is not only for right actions, those he is ready to perform against all reason (which is to say when they are not required); he is also for an order of things in which chivalrous action is demanded, and not only for damsels in distress. Don Quixote is also thinking of the earth, which men persist in torturing with blunt-edged instruments. (What would he have said about the disfigurement of nature we tolerate today? Heidegger, perhaps speaking for him, has remarked that we put a gun to nature and take its wealth, to our own future impoverishment.) Let it be noted that Don Quixote has notions about the morally good, the socially good, and of what is good for the natural world.

Having chosen the Hidalgo as the paradigmatic figure of metatheater, I realize that I must explain why I preferred him to any character of Pirandello, although the latter wrote most of the great plays of our own or any time that can be called metatheatrical, and it is to him we owe whatever understanding we have of the form. My reason for not selecting a character from one of his plays is this: Great as a playwright, Pirandello was not a great creator of character. Of all the characters who come on stage in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, there is not one who is convincing as more than a stage type. And in his other plays, many of them masterpieces of construction, fulfilling Aristotle's requirement that plot be plausible even if the characters are less so, there is no individual we can find who is deeply touching or deeply true. To be sure, the protagonist of *Henry IV* has been compared to Hamlet. But the comparison should not have been made; it will not help us understand either figure. Granted that the hero of *Henry IV* has endured a tragic loss—twenty of what might have been the best years of his life—yet his calculated revenge, made possible by society's notion that he is mad, is surely an unworthy deed. We cannot admire him for it, or pity him for having as a consequence to remain in the asylum which has become his home. And it is to be noted that the Father in *Six Characters*, while philosophically keen and eloquent in his contention that characters

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of fiction like Sancho Panza are immortal, is hardly more memorable than the other stage types composing his family. These are certainly not immortal figures; they hardly survive in our memory the curtain's fall.[3]

Pirandello's limitations in character creation may be laid up to his skepticism about moral values and his disinclination to make moral judgments. It is only by showing moral differences, as Aristotle noted, that characters can be differentiated on the stage. But for Pirandello, a moral crisis is always resolved into an intellectual crisis, terminating in some paradox. Action in his plays is stripped of all value terms and treated as a fact among facts. He seems not to have noticed that the very reality of a deed is in some important sense related to our judgment of its worth. In the saying "Murder will out," the word "murder" stands for something other than the fact that one person has been deprived of life by another. For surely we do not mean that every deed of this kind will necessarily become known. By "Murder will out," we mean that every deed we judge ethically (and emotionally) as "murder" *should* out, that we are not willing to allow an evil intent bringing death with it to remain hidden forever. Now I am not saying that this conviction of ours is justified. It shows only that a moral judgment is imbedded in the very word "murder," which is conveyed by Hamlet when he says:

> Murder
> Though it have no tongue will speak
> With most miraculous organ.

An act of killing, not judged ethically or emotionally, may have no such miraculous organ and may not speak at all. The killing of Belcredi in Pirandello's *Henry IV* is not "murder" in this ethical sense, and we are quite unmoved by the deed. We do not care about Belcredi and think the less of the false Henry IV for having killed him. The contradiction between Pirandello's skeptical positivism and what is morally required for serious drama is very evident here.

3. It is interesting too that, in arguing for the immortality of the great characters of fiction, the Father, advised by Pirandello, chooses Sancho Panza, and not Don Quixote, as an example. I would suggest that the Knight of the Mournful Countenance seemed too great a figure for the Father (or his creator) to put on the same scale with any of the Six Characters. This tells us that Pirandello was much wiser than the dramatic critics who compared the protagonist of his *Henry IV* to Hamlet.

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Though he does not believe in truth, he subjects feelings and values to truth-tests they are simply unable to pass. Pirandello's limitations here are, of course, not just those of a thinker. They also define his failings as a dramatist.

It is my contention that the term "tragicomedy" is confusing; it implies that there is a formal way of going from tragic to comic effects. But one has to care about a character if his mishaps are to affect one seriously, and one cannot care about a character if one is to enjoy seeing him ridiculed. If you care for M. Orgon, you will not laugh at his credulity vis-à-vis Tartuffe. This problem bedevilled Chekhov. He loved his characters, but he wanted the plays he set them in to be comedies, and they seldom make us laugh. He has created exquisite moments, to which we often do not know how to respond. We do not know whether to laugh or cry when Vanya, who is bringing a rose to Elena, finds her in Dr. Astrov's arms. But a whole play can hardly be constructed around such moments. Here I think the notion of metatheatrical form has its real use. Metatheater can convey both the comic and the tragic, since it can keep them separate. And here, too, the novels of Cervantes provide a model. We do care about Don Quixote, and yet all the same we laugh at his mistakes, failings, and misadventures. Now how is this possible?

First of all, the fact that his actions are inspired by what we take to be a kind of madness lightens the gravity of his serious collapses; the comic effects of the novel are not quite grotesque, and such pains as the knight suffers do not seem lasting as they might seem if realistically described. Events do not lead to or call finally for tragedy. Now it may be that "metatheater" is simply a clearer term than "tragicomedy": it suggests a restrained comicality, together with a serious painfulness, one not pushed to the point of tragedy. Such effects are characteristic of Cervantes's novel.

But I would like to be clearer about the difficulty of joining the comic to the tragic in a unified dramatic work. Here I shall rely on a distinction made by Bakhtin in the essay on form and content which I have already cited. He distinguishes the *architectonic* from the *compositional* form in a literary work. The architectonic is the aesthetic object provided us by a work; let us say of a play: in that case, its architectonic would tell us whether the play is a romance, a tragedy, a melodrama, a comedy, or a farce. The compositional form describes the work conventionally; it distinguishes a play from a novel, but it cannot distinguish a comedy from a tragedy or the picaresque from an educational novel. Let us ask now: is there an architectonic

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form or only a compositional form for what is called "tragicomedy"? Tragedy results from seeing an action from the viewpoint of perfection, comedy from the viewpoint of common sense. Can these viewpoints be easily substituted one for the other, and in a unified work? But something very different follows from seeing an action from the one viewpoint than seeing that same action from the other. The fact is that the Greeks and the dramatists of the French classical theater were, I think, quite right in separating tragedy from comedy. If the values of the comic and the tragic can be brought together in a unified work—and it is my claim that they can—it is certainly not by making a mix of the two, for we can see in Chekhov's plays that when mixed they destroy each other. Yet the comic and the tragic may appear harmoniously in a single work if, conforming to the metatheatrical canon, it is a play within a play. In this case, one of the plays can have a form stipulating tragedy, the other a form stipulating comedy, so that once again there will be a separation, though in a single work, of the comic and the tragic. *But there is no form, no nonconventional, architectonic form for tragicomedy.* There is just one other possibility, realized most perfectly by Pirandello, of bringing the tragic and the comic together under one architectonic: this can be achieved when the effects of comedy and tragedy are *both* subordinated to the theatrical, and this becomes possible in a *play about theater*, as in *Tonight We Improvise*, by no means Pirandello's masterpiece, but yet a work in which the comic and the tragic are brought together under a single architectonic form.

In *Tonight We Improvise*, the play of that title is in the process of being rehearsed, and one character in it, the actor, Penny-Whistle, is on stage. He is doing a death scene, but then, too, he is actually dying. To be sure, there is much more of the sophistry of feeling in his playacting than of the true feeling of a man facing death, but this sophistry of feeling takes on the accents of truth because we know the actor is really dying. We also know that he wants to be affecting and are touched by the fact that a man who is dying can have such thoughts. On the stage with Penny-Whistle is Dr. Hinkfuss, the stage manager, also a customer, and a Chanteuse. Here is just a fragment of this wonderful scene, too long to quote in full:

> PENNY-WHISTLE: I am saying that I have not been able to die, Mr. Manager; I have not been able to pull it off; and I can't help laughing when I see all these people have it over me, and me not able to die. The maid . . . (*He looks*

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around.) . . .where is she? She was supposed to come in crying: "O my God! . . . they're bringing him home wounded!"

DOCTOR HINKFUSS: But what difference does that make now? Did I tell you we could take your homecoming for granted?

PENNY-WHISTLE: Well, then, it seems to me you ought to take it for granted that I am dead, and not expect me to say anything more.

DOCTOR HINKFUSS: Nothing of the sort! You must speak. Go on with the scene. Die!

PENNY-WHISTLE: Very well. Here's the scene for you: (*He lies back on the divan.*) I'm dead.

DOCTOR HINKFUSS: But not like that!

PENNY-WHISTLE: (*Leaping to his feet and coming forward*): My dear Mr. Manager, why don't you come up here and finish me off? . . . For me my entrance was everything. You've seen fit to skip that . . . I needed that maid's scream to get properly worked up. And Death was supposed to come in with me . . . And I was supposed to speak. . . . as I leaned on this lady here. (*He draws the CHANTEUSE to him and leans against her, an arm around her neck.*) . . . I was supposed to make you weep—really weep— with the last bit of breath in my body, bringing my lips together like this (*He tries to whistle, but is unable to*) . . . it was to be my last little whistle; and now . . . (*He calls the CUSTOMER to his side*) . . . *come here* . . . (*He puts one arm around the CUSTOMER's neck*) like this —between you two—but closer to you, my dear—dropping my head—as little birds do—when they die. (*He drops his head on the breast of the CHANTEUSE; a moment later, his arms relax and he drops to the floor dead.*)

I cite this scene to make my point, but also in tribute to Pirandello, who has helped us understand one of the essential forms of narrative drama, the kind of drama in which Don Quixote appears.

And now I can ask this question: How does Don Quixote *differ* from heroes of tragedy?

Nabokov describes the knight as possessed of a "whimsical nobility." I find the phrase capital, for Don Quixote's "nobility" is never required by the facts. He actually arraigns the facts insofar as they do not require it of him. The hero of tragedy, Bernard Knox has told us, replies to argument with arguments and to force with force. Don Quixote initiates argument, and against those he sees as

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villainous—like the windmills—he resorts to the test of strength. But we best understand his character in the way he responds to efforts to free him from the illusions he holds. These are not petty, but grandiose. Which is why he cannot do without them. He cannot be cured of his beliefs by any evidence that they are false, like the petit bourgeois Hjalmir Ekdal in Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*, or the trivial bums in O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*. When Sancho Panza presents a snub-nosed farm girl without delicacy or beauty to the knight as the Dulcinea of his dreams, saying that she has been transformed by an evil enchanter, Don Quixote sees nothing false in the explanation, and is simply saddened by Dulcinea's fate. As for Sancho Panza, he permits himself to laugh at the knight's credulity and then strives on some other occasion to be as credulous.

Now no hero of tragedy would cling to the illusions to which Don Quixote holds fast. But then Don Quixote is an artist, which a hero of tragedy may be by chance, but is certainly never obliged to be. What is the knight's art? It is the art of playing with life. The notion that there is such an art was formulated by Max Scheler—"The Artist in the Art of Playing with Life" was the title for an essay he planned but never actually wrote. A similar idea was envisaged by Baudelaire in his essay, "The Painter and Modern Life." And I think the notion of such an art is implicit in the behavior of certain exceptional personalities, fictional and historical. Is it not implicit in the tales of Lord Genji's many affairs? Closer to us in time and culture there is Cardinal Retz, who opened the gates of the palace to revolutionary mobs. Then there are Stendhal, and his hero, Count Mosca. And we might add to the list Lord Byron and Oscar Wilde. The art of playing with life is a literary art, requiring that one turn a chance event into an advantage, as a writer must do at all times. We admire Cyrano as he does this when anyone dares to affront him. We have to admire the way he is able to find an artistic outcome in what at first looks like an insult to him.

And Don Quixote? He has given himself the role of looking for adversaries; it is not his duty to do this. For whatever befalls him, he has no one to blame but himself, and, in fact, he is uncomplaining. And as Nabokov points out against Joseph Wood Krutch, he is often victorious. The number of his victories is equal to the number of his defeats. So Rosa Luxemburg's gibe against the Knight recoils against her. She ridiculed those who ride off on "that old nag Rosi-

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nante, named Justice, only to come back with their eyes blackened." It is indeed odd that she should have launched this *boutade* against Don Quixote, being herself in worldy terms much the greater failure.

Here I must enter into conflict with Miguel de Unamuno, the remarkable Spanish thinker for whom I have the greatest admiration: he has claimed Don Quixote as a hero of tragedy, while I have to claim him for another dramatic form. That Don Quixote suffers is true, but he does not suffer tragically; he dies of old age, even denying the value of his deeds. What we have here is not the death of a tragic hero. He has admitted that he was his own playwright, and that the plots in which he was embedded were of his own devising. His adventures did not always turn out well—but he could no more be in control of everything he contrived to happen than a good writer of narrative can be—there are hazards in dramatic writing where chance, too, has a role. Now, Unamuno claiming his hero for tragedy also says that he made himself ridiculous (which no hero of tragedy does). He notes that Don Quixote is very like a "brother" to Sigismund, the hero of Calderon's "Life Is a Dream," the greatest of metatheatrical plays.[4] But I will belabor the point no further. I like Unamuno too much to enjoy being on the other side from him, even in a matter of pedantry.

What about the fact that Don Quixote repents of his illusions on his deathbed and admits that his deeds were mad? Much has been made of this scene by critics, but I believe it has been misinterpreted. All Don Quixote is saying as death approaches is that the curtain of the stage he acted on is coming down. To act, as he did, on the stage of life, one must be possessed, as indeed he had been. Don Quixote's last words, in repenting his follies, are certainly not

4. Robert Ter Horst in his recent book, *Calderon. The Secular Plays*, suggests that Calderon made a dramatic science of the insights first explored by Cervantes. He writes: " . . . despite this greater and more symmetrical elaboration in Calderon, Cervantes made the initial discovery. . . . In transferring his major creative activity from the public stage to the privacies of prose fiction, Cervantes creates and discovers . . . a whole new universe. . . . With elaborations and adaptations of genius, Calderon integrates Cervantes's new theater into his own stage. . . . In this fresh field of knowledge, Calderon is a great scientist. He fashions its corresponding principle." I think this could hardly be better said.

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his best. They hardly belong to the great figure who formerly held center stage and seem to me more appropriate coming from someone sitting in the audience, possibly a critic, perfectly sensible and inescapably mediocre, as are all of us in death, which, as Shakespeare says, "makes the odds all even."

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Jeffrey Herf

PHILLIP JENNINGER AND THE DANGERS OF SPEAKING CLEARLY

George Orwell thought politicians should speak the truth in simple, declarative sentences. He thought clear language would help defeat totalitarianism. Politicians, however, know that speaking the plain truth directly is politically risky. Therefore, they learn the value of euphemism and unnecessary abstraction. Once in a while, however, a politician comes along who, perhaps having read too much Orwell the night before, falls into old patterns, speaks the truth in simple declarative sentences—and wrecks his political career. This happened in West Germany to the president of the Bundestag, and a leading member of the conservative Christian Democratic Party, Phillip Jenninger.

The occasion was the fiftieth "anniversary" of *Kristallnacht*, what the West Germans prefer to call *Pogromnacht*, pogrom night of November 8, 1938. After Bitburg and the *Historikersstreit*, West German conservatives were understandably edgy about making another *faux pas* in dealing with the Nazi past. In October, the president of the Federal Republic, Richard von Weizsacker, whose speech of May 8, 1985, served as a kind of moral damage control after Bitburg, addressed the annual meeting of West German historians. He spoke on the subject of the recent *Historikersstreit*, the dispute initiated by Ernst Nolte's musings that Auschwitz was prefigured by and was a mimicking reaction to the Gulag. Weizsacker would have none of that. The Germans could not make others responsible for national socialism. Germany under the Nazis "was led by criminals and allowed itself to be led by them. It knows that this is true, especially where it would prefer not to know this. . . . " He criticized comparisons of Auschwitz with other cases of ruthless extermination. "Auschwitz remains unique. It was perpetrated by Germans in the name of Germany. This truth is immutable and will not be forgotten."[1] The overwhelming majority of the historians present were

1. Richard von Weizsacker, "Speech by President Richard von Weizsacker at the opening of the 37th Historians' Congress in Bamburg on 12 October 1988," *Bundespräsidialamt Presse*, p. 2.

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in full agreement with these sentiments. Weizsacker's statement of these truisms aroused no controversy.

During the week of the commemoration of *Pogromnacht*, Chancellor Kohl, who had insisted on President Reagan going to Bitburg, spoke to the Jewish community of Frankfurt assembled in the main synagogue in the Frankfurt West End. The Chancellor said many true things:

> The cynical and (*verharmlosende*) apologetic term "*Kristallnacht*" cloaks what really happened then. On November 9, 1938, National Socialist terror against Jewish citizens reached a new dimension. Ten thousand were imprisoned and shipped to concentration camps. Thousands were mishandled. Hundreds were murdered or driven to death.
>
> The pogrom night was . . . a purposeful, systematic, and merciless persecution of the Jews. It was the latest point at which everyone must have become aware that anti-Semitism was the core of National Socialist ideology, and that it was not a mere instrument of domination among others—and certainly not an accidental, peripheral manifestation of dictatorship.[2]

Many, he continued, suffered under the Nazi regime. "But the hate against the Jews—men, women, and children—went further: the fact that someone was of Jewish origin constituted a crime to be punished by death." Auschwitz and Treblinka were "rooted from the beginning in godless ideology which raised a race to the level of a god." Why, he asked, did so few protest and speak out against the persecution of the Jews, which began on January 30, 1933, continued "with growing brutality and in full view of the public," and penetrated the closest neighbors?

The law, as evident in the Nuremberg racial laws, the Chancellor continued, served to oppress, not protect the weak. The November pogrom was not a spontaneous public outburst but an attack organized by the government. It remained a "source of deep shame" that the majority of the population remained silent due to lack of civil courage, fear, or indifference. Others were filled with *Schadenfreude* or participated and profited from the attacks. He recalled "with

2. "Die Ansprache des Bundeskanzlers anlässlich des 50. Jahrestages der Progromnacht: Die Menschen von heute sind nicht besser oder mutiger als damals," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* Nr. 263 (November 10, 1988), p. 5.

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deep respect and gratitude" those few who stood by their Jewish fellow citizens by hiding them or helping them to escape.

The Chancellor urged the young not to be self-righteous. "People today . . . are not better or more courageous than people were then." Today they live under the rule of law and are spared the difficult dilemmas created by the Third Reich. This should encourage modesty, gratitude for living in a free democracy, and constant vigilance against the threat of totalitarian rule. As unique as the genocide of the European Jews by the Germans was, it was essential to be vigilant so that nothing similar would happen again. Identification with the victims was demanded of a just, pluralistic society today.

As for German history, Kohl saw it as "indivisible" in containing both good and evil. He stressed solidarity with Israel's security and life interests, recalled the contributions of Jews to Germany's traditions of freedom, and pointed to a future, free, pluralistic, peaceful, post-nationalistic Europe based on the values of Jews and Christians. We Germans, he said, "must overcome the idea that Jews stand on the margin of Western history. The contrary is the case. Their place is in the middle of the great traditions, which have shaped the political cultures of Europe and America." In many countries, Jews stood in the forefront of the struggle for human and civil rights, for pluralism and rule of law. National Socialism was an attack on this European culture.

Jews and Christians shared the conviction of the uniqueness and dignity of the individual created in the image of God, and the idea that human beings are entrusted with God's creation to preserve and further shape it. They both rejected idolatry that in modern form had led to absolute claims of ideologies. Kohl said:

> Because Judaism is, in its essence, antitotalitarian, totalitarianism is, as Manès Sperber once wrote, "everywhere anti-Jewish." Jews and Christians are common, natural enemies in the opposition to all ideological-political claims to absolute authority. Making as many people as possible aware of this insight is . . . one of the decisive tasks of the Christian-Jewish dialogue.

Kohl concluded:

> Dear Jewish citizens! Allow me to close with a personal remark. The fact that you live in the Federal Republic of Germany is a sign of trust in us—and I speak now for the non-Jewish majority—this sign moves us deeply. For we have no claim to this

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> trust after what happened in Germany before and after November 8, 1938. [Your presence] is a precious gift, among the most precious that was placed in our hands since 1945. It is also a fragile, easily broken gift. I am aware that your trust is easily shattered: by the presence of the eternal yesterday, and sometimes also from the thoughtlessness of the well-meaning.

The free community initiated forty years earlier in West Germany was "our common home." Kohl called for the participation of the Jews in West Germany in the protection and further development of this common home.

Kohl was interrupted by hecklers objecting to the presence of the man of Bitburg in the Frankfurt synagogue. But the original reception was warm, as one might expect in response to a speech by a Catholic West German chancellor who placed the Jewish tradition where it belongs—in the center of Western culture—and who quoted Manès Sperber to an audience of Frankfurt Jews. It was a kind speech, a speech of welcome and friendship which, though made by a politician, was at least a nice gesture and at best a sign of a genuine effort to reach out and mend fences after the wounds created by his decision to go to Bitburg. There was no effort here to push things under the rug, to forgive and forget, to put a best face on the horrible truth. Kohl tried to do the almost impossible, that is, to make the Jews listening feel more at home in West Germany by describing their presence as a "precious gift." Some say they would expect nothing less. In this century, one should be grateful for such expressions of elementary decency.

On Friday November 10, two days after Kohl's speech in Frankfurt, Phillip Jenninger, the president of the West German Parliament, the Bundestag, delivered the most truthful, bluntest, most direct, and to the point speech about the Nazi era ever given by a major West German political leader since 1949, inside or outside the Parliament. About a third of the way through the speech, fifty members of Parliament from the Green Party and the Social Democratic Party walked out of the chambers. A firestorm of protest and anger exploded in the West German press and media. The following day, Jenninger, known as a long-standing friend of Israel and supporter of better understanding between Germans and Jews, resigned his position as president of the Bundestag. Jenninger's way of speaking the truth brought his political career, at least temporarily, to a shattering end.

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What makes his 7,000-word speech so distinctive, and what sets it apart from other speeches about the Nazi past, is its persistent and resolute *factuality*. Instead of calling for recollection in the abstract, Jenninger recalled and did so in considerable detail. On Wednesday night, the Chancellor had addressed West German Jews. On Friday, Jenninger spoke to the non-Jewish West Germans. As he said, the Jews everywhere know what happened on "pogrom night" of November 1938. "But do we [West Germans] know, too?"[3] Judging from his speech, Phillip Jenninger thought that the West Germans needed an extended history lesson.

Jenninger recalled how the highest authorities suspended right and law, how the state itself became an organizer of crime, and how open terror against the Jews emerged. He laid out facts and figures. In the pogrom over two hundred synagogues were burned or demolished, thousands of businesses and homes destroyed. Several hundred Jews were killed, and about 30,000 were taken to concentration camps. The police and fireman allowed synagogues to burn, unless "Aryan" property was threatened. The event marked the beginning of the "destruction of the Jews in Germany and in large parts of Europe." The non-Jewish population remained passive, as it had since 1933 in the face of anti-Jewish actions. There was "no resistance worth mentioning" and only isolated acts of help and practical solidarity. "Everyone saw what happened, but almost everyone looked away and remained silent. The churches remained silent too."

Why? How? Jenninger offered no generalities about man's inhumanity to man. He said that in the five years from 1933 to 1938, a century of Jewish advance in Germany was wrecked through boycotts of Jewish stores, forced retirements of Jewish civil servants, the expulsion of Jews from journalism, art, medicine, and law. The Nuremberg laws of 1935 reduced them to second-class citizenship. In spring 1938, Jewish property was expropriated. The Nazis ordered the Jews to come up with a billion marks to pay for the physical damage done by the Nazi thugs on November 9, 1938. Jenninger said that a "revolution" took place in Germany between 1933 and 1938 in which the *Rechtstaat* was transformed into an illegal and criminal state. At the end of this revolution, Nazi rule was more

3. Phillip Jenninger, "Die Opfer wissen, was der November 1938 fur sie bedeutet hatte: Die Rede des Bundespräsident im Wortlaut," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* Nr. 264 (November 11, 1988), p. 6.

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firmly anchored in the consciousness of the people. By 1938, Germany had taken leave of Europe's spiritual identity. It had willed this "descent into barbarism." Hitler's word and Nazi ideology became the authoritative source of law.

Then, to a Parliament filled almost totally with university graduates, as well as lawyers, and not a few Ph.D.'s, Jenninger, in the best Weberian fashion, sought to present a partial causal explanation of the destruction of the European Jews by taking into account the outlook of the Germans in 1938. His elementary but true foray in interpretive historical sociology caused the storm and wrecked his own political career:

> Perhaps, even more decisive for the fate of the Germans and the European Jews than Hitler's evil deeds and crimes were his successes. Today, even from a distanced vantage point and with knowledge of the consequences, the years from 1933 to 1938 are a source of fascination, insofar as there is scarcely a parallel in history to Hitler's triumphal political march in these first years.

The accomplishments included reincorporation of the Saar, introduction of general military service, massive armament, signing the British-German fleet agreements, the Berlin Olympics, the Anschluss of Austria, and, a few weeks before the November pogrom, the Munich treaty and the division of Czechoslovakia. The Versailles Treaty had become a scrap of paper, and the German Reich was now the hegemonial power on the continent:

> For the Germans, who overwhelmingly saw the Weimar Republic as the result of foreign policy humiliation, all of this must have seemed like a miracle. And there was more: full employment replaced mass unemployment, and mass suffering gave way to prosperity for the broadest strata. Instead of desperation and hopelessness, there was optimism and self-confidence.

Wasn't Hitler really "chosen by providence, a leader which is sent a people only once in a thousand years?" Of course, Hitler had never won a free election. But "who could doubt that in 1938 a great majority of the Germans stood behind him, and identified with him and his policies?" A few troublemakers aside, most Germans "from all strata" were convinced in 1938 that Hitler was the greatest statesman of German history.

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Hitler's every success made the Weimar Republic look worse by comparison. Weimar was associated with weakness in foreign policy, an excess of party politics, economic suffering, chaos and street fighting. Democracy and parliamentarism, division of powers and civil rights, freedom of the press and association, and "Jewish emancipation and assimilation" were all associated with the Weimar years. Hitler's successes "retrospectively discredited" parliamentarism, freedom, and democracy. Individuals had less freedom but things were better than before 1933. And after all, hadn't Britain, France, and Italy met Hitler's expectations in Munich, expectations that no one thought they would meet:

> And as for the Jews: hadn't they found a role in the past which they did not deserve? Must not some limits finally be placed on them? Didn't they deserve to be shown these limits? And above all, didn't the propaganda, aside from the wild, not seriously intended exaggerations, contain in its essential points one's own conjectures and convictions?

It was when Jenninger finished this part of his speech, a part clearly intended to articulate the views of a hypothetical Germany of 1938—and obviously not his own views—that the fifty members of the Parliament walked out.

Jenninger then turned to the historic roots of Nazism. Anti-Semitism had existed in Germany and in Europe for centuries. But German nationalism differed in important ways from the nationalism of other countries. Liberal, parliamentary, and democratic currents remained underdeveloped. Foreign policy aggressiveness merged with domestic authoritarianism and persecution of minorities. There followed rapid industrialization and urbanization, accompanied by a diffuse discontent with modernity. The Jews played an important role in industry, banking, business, medicine, law, natural sciences, and culture in the process of modernization, which aroused jealousy and inferiority complexes among Germans. Anti-Semitic tracts of the early twentiety century linked the Jews to capitalism, big cities, liberalism, and socialism. Scholars, such as Heinrich von Treitschke, and artists, such as Richard Wagner, "made anti-Jewish resentments *salonfähig*. The Jews became socially allowed hate objects." Anti-Semites seized upon Darwinism to create a scientific veneer for their melange of the Jewish world conspiracy and the battle of races.

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Jenninger then turned to Hitler's world view, which he called a "so-called *Weltanschauung* without an original thought," filled with biological racism focused on hatred of the Jews, antimodernism, and visions of an original agrarian society to be realized in the *Lebensraum* of the East. Hitler's real contribution, Jenninger pointed out, lay in the "further coarsening, simplification, and brutalization" of ideas taken from others, and in the "fanatical obsession and mass psychological ability" with which he became National Socialism's most important propagandist. Jenninger recalled that Hitler saw in the Jews the cause of all evil: they were the November criminals of 1918, capitalists, bolsheviks, freemasons, liberals, democrats, and in general the cause of Germany's military, political, economic and social disasters:

> History [for Hitler] was reduced to a battle of the races: between Aryans and the Jew, between "Germanic" culture contributors and 'Jewish sub-humans.' The salvation of the German people and the decisive defeat of the despoilers of humanity could take place only as the salvation of the world from Jewish blood as the evil principle of history.

The counterimage to the Jew was the warrior and farmer, battling the Asiatic hordes and extending German culture and race. "So, while the atom bomb was being built elsewhere, Himmler and others announced these ideas bordering on idiocy with the reassuring monotony of a lunatic." In passages that would bring a smile of recognition to any mildly informed reader of psychoanalytic studies of Nazi ideology, Jenninger recounted and attacked Hitler's "insane images" of dark-haired, hooked-nosed Jews raping white, blonde-haired Germanic women. Hitler's hatred of the Jews dominated him to the last.

Jenninger then turned to the Holocaust. The attack on the Soviet Union offered Hitler the opportunity to accomplish both of his goals: attain *Lebensraum* in the East, and realize "'destruction of the Jewish race in Europe' which he had publicly announced on January 30, 1939." The words *Kommissarbefehl* and *Einsatzgruppen* prefigured a "gigantic murder." In the months following June 22, 1941, thousands of Jewish men, women, and children were shot by *Einsatzgruppen* active behind the lines. The "final solution" began long before it was announced at the Wannsee Conference on January 20, 1942. Then came death factories, gas chambers, ovens, and 'gas wagons.'

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Jenninger went on to recall Dostoevsky's statement that "if God did not exist, everything would be allowed." He commented that "what to his [Dostoevsky's] contemporaries may have appeared as an offhand speculation of a religious dreamer has proven itself to be the most prophetic anticipation of the political crimes of the twentieth century." He then quoted directly from a gruesome eyewitness account of an SS mass murder. There were SS-men with whips and machine guns, family members in tears trying to comfort one another, then the shots, and piles of bodies and blood; one of the murderers smoked a cigarette with a machine gun on his knees, and another group stood before the pit about to be shot. Jenninger quoted Himmler's famous—outside the Bundestag—speech to the SS *Gruppenführer* in Posen in 1943 in which Himmler spoke of what it meant to see the piles of bodies and to have remained "honorable," to have fulfilled a duty to the *Volk* "without having suffered damage to our insides, to our souls." Jenninger confessed "our powerlessness in the face of these sentences" and of the million-fold disaster. "Numbers and words no longer help. Suffering cannot be made good, the victims are irreplaceable, and all efforts to explain and understand fall short."

Jenninger continued with how the Germans responded to the truth after 1945. The end of the war had been a "deep shock" in many ways:

> All effort and sacrifice had been meaningless. In addition to the horrible truth about the Holocaust, there emerged the knowledge, which perhaps until today has not been completely internalized, that the planning of the war in the East and the destruction of the Jews were inseparable from one another, that one without the other would not have been possible.

In 1945, disillusionment with National Socialism merged with a defense against grief and guilt and prevented a direct confrontation with the past. The "quick identification with the Western victors" called for a belief that the Germans—"just like other peoples—had been only misused, 'occupied' and ultimately liberated." Today, Jenninger said, one can criticize such "processes of repression" but moral superiority won't help. Perhaps the Germans of 1945 could do no better.

But today, "all questions are posed with full knowledge of Auschwitz. In 1933, no one could know what the reality of 1941 would be." Now it was clear that centuries of hostility to the Jews

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were the soil for Nazi propaganda, and that there was widespread support for solving the "Jewish problem" by sending the Jews to Madagascar.

> It is true, that the National Socialists made great efforts to keep the reality of the mass murder secret. But it is also true that everyone knew about the Nuremberg laws, that everyone could see fifty years ago what was happening in Germany, and the deportations took place in public.

Jenninger quoted a previous West German member of parliament, Adolf Arndt, who in 1968 said, "The essentials were known." But Jenninger said, in the end, "The Jews stood alone. Their fate met blindness and cold hearts."

We must, Jenninger continued, reject efforts to place the historical truth into question, to play with numbers or deny facts. That amounts to defending what cannot be defended. Such efforts are "senseless" for "until the end of time, people will remember that Auschwitz was part of our, of German history." No less senseless was the effort to "finally put an end" to talk about the past. It is a past that will not go away. Young Germans had a right to know the truth of how it came about. The preoccupation with the crimes of the National Socialist past had grown with time. For Jenninger, confrontation with the past was possible only in the "painful experience of the truth. This self-liberation in the confrontation with horror is less torturous than its repression":

> Ladies and gentlemen, keeping memory fresh and alive, and accepting the past as part of our identity as Germans—only this promises us of the older generation as well as the young liberation from the burden of history.

Like Kohl, two days before, Jenninger concluded his remarks with affirmation of an ethic of responsibility for the future, for preservation of peace, for the right of the existence of the Jews in secure borders, survival in the third world, tolerance at home, and support for individual human dignity.

A speech delivered is not the same as a written text. News reports said Jenninger's speaking style left something to be desired, and that it was not clear to members of parliament that he was evoking the mood of Germans in 1938, instead of advocating these views.

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In view of the fact that Jenninger read the speech that was printed the following day in the press, only an erroneous or a politically motivated reading could lead to the assumption that Jenninger was in fact advocating the views of the Nazis in the 1930s. Yet this interpretation carried the day, and Jenninger, who had just delivered one of the greatest speeches on the Nazi era by any West German politician since 1949, agreed to resign under enormous pressure.

Perhaps the left walked out partly because Jenninger refused to repeat the myth that Hitler was never popular, or because the walkout seemed a good tactic to weaken the conservative-liberal coalition in Bonn. Perhaps the conservatives accepted Jenninger's resignation with the appropriate regrets because he had spoken so truthfully about the past they had not faced in the postwar years. Jenninger made them uncomfortable as well. Why go to the mat for a politician who spoke so bluntly about what many conservatives would really rather not discuss? After all, even in 1988, Jenninger had broken taboos. I do not recall another West German politician who made the link between the attack on the Soviet Union and the murder of the Jews as explicit as he did. Nor can I remember another West German conservative politician who spoke as critically as he did about the "quick identification" with the victors and the retrospective myth-making that entailed in the postwar years. So Phillip Jenninger antagonized the left, which did not want to hear that Germans believed such rot, and his own conservatives, for whom he was too blunt.

If one compares Jenninger's speech with those of Weizsacker and Kohl, or most speeches given on such occasions, its distinctive feature is clearly its concern for truth in the most specific, concrete manner. Jenninger offered, in Gertrude Himmelfarb's terms, history with the politics, ideas, and events brought back in. There is not a sentence of euphemism in the entire speech. Every paragraph has a name, date, place, and event, every act, an actor, and, as much as possible, every effect, a cause. There are few, if any, passive sentences. It has none of the ersatz profundity about modernity or impersonal forces that was an important part of the apologetic *Kulturkritik* of a Martin Heidegger or an Albert Speer. Nor does it romanticize the Germans as the victims of a detested Nazi regime. They emerge as accomplices. He presented Europe and its anti-Semitic face without adornment. The prose is clear and plain, the sort of political language George Orwell fostered.

In the Bundestag though, those deputies of the left, the very

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ones most likely to know the difference between *Erklären* and *Verstehen*, and to understand the importance of meaning in human life and in politics, were the very deputies whose ears were too sensitive to hear Jenninger's reconstruction of the German *mentalité* of 1938. After years of rhetoric of "coming to terms with the past," when faced with a man who actually was doing so right before their eyes, they turned on him with rage and scorn, aided and abetted by their outraged colleagues in the press and media. There should be no doubt about this: Jenninger said nothing in his speech that is not to be found in the great works of the German and German-Jewish historians of Nazism—Karl Bracher, Raul Hilberg, George Mosse, Fritz Stern, among others. These facts and analyses, some over thirty or more years old, were apparently too much for the left in the West German Parliament to stomach. So they shot the messenger while the conservative party ran for cover.

The resignation of Phillip Jenninger, not his speech, was a disgrace. He was quite right in assuming that after years of euphemism, West Germans needed to speak to West Germans about the still not well-understood nor well-digested historical facts. Jenninger has revived West German memory not by talking—yet again—about coming to terms with the past but by doing something much more difficult and important, that is, by talking about what happened in the past. Everyone has talked about reviving German memory. Jenninger did it. He was not too subtle or too difficult to understand. His mistake, as Orwell would have understood, was in being all too clear and to the point.

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Kay Agena

AN INTERVIEW WITH HERNANDO DE SOTO

KA: In 1980, you founded the Institute for Liberty and Democracy in Peru. What were the factors that led you to create the Institute and what are its goals?

HS: Well, the factors that led myself and friends to create the Institute were that we had just come out of a long dictatorship in Peru, which lasted about twelve years, and we figured that unless there were some radical changes, the nature of which still had to be explored, there was no reason why we wouldn't fall into a dictatorship again, once what we called democracy and what we called free enterprise failed again in Peru. So the objective was to dig into the reasons why democracy and liberty so frequently are thwarted in our country and come up with solutions. That was the objective of founding the Institute in 1980.

KA: There is a notion in international diplomatic circles that the reason third world countries are economically backward is due to the fact that they have wide-open, unregulated markets that have been manipulated and exploited by foreign corporations or, on the other hand, there is the belief that the developing countries are poor because the people there lack sufficient initiative. Would you comment on these notions and what your research at ILD has revealed with respect to them.

HS: What our research at ILD has revealed is that there are reasons for lagging development other than those usually given. The external debt, for example, has not been created by foreigners, but by ourselves. As ILD has demonstrated, the price the state has paid for certain infrastructure projects is nearly 100 percent higher, on the average, than the prices paid by other consumers in other parts of the world. So, what we're saying is that we have found sufficient deficiences in our government and states, the way our public apparatus works, to warrant rearranging or adjusting our capacity to deal through our government before going out and saying that the terms are set against us. In Peru, for example, only one fourth of the foreign debt was incurred by the private sector, and the private sector didn't really need to have it rescheduled or renegotiated. It was the public sector that incurred the debt. It wasn't due to the fact that

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the markets were too open, but that they were controlled by the state, and the state got into bad deals.

Secondly, in terms of the notion that there is no initiative in developing countries, the very fact that 95 percent of public transportation in a city like Lima is dominated by the informal sector, that seven out of every ten buildings being built in Peru are built by the informal sector, and that twelve out of every thirteen producer's markets being built in the country are being built by the informal sector clearly show that the initiative is there. But the informal sector has no credit, is persecuted by the law, has no contracts that can be enforced in courts, no legal business organizations, no way to cover against risk through insurance, no limited liability or large percentage of shareholderships, and yet it still accounts for 40 percent of the gross national product. This is an indication that there's plenty of initiative in the country.

KA: Could you give us some details with respect to how long it takes a small business to get licensed and what the cost is in your country?

HS: Yes, we have found out that the law in developing countries such as ours affects people differently according to what their resources are, what their class level is, if you want. So, for example, someone like myself will not spend more than six hours with his lawyer to incorporate a firm. But we simulated the process for setting up a small business in which two sewing machines would be the capital equipment of a small workshop. We put a lawyer and four of his administrators in charge of going through all the red tape required to operate those two sewing machines legally, and, working six hours a day, it took them 289 days. No low-income person could hold out for that amount of time; the cost would just be too prohibitive.

KA: You recommended a reform of Peru's regulatory procedures and presented it to the previous administration's government. What did the reform entail, and what was the outcome of it?

HS: Peru's former president had been impressed by the fact that we had demonstrated that more than half of the population of Peru worked outside the law, following extralegal norms. He asked us if ILD would suggest some reforms. Since he had only about six months before the termination of his administration, we proposed only one reform, which had to do with rule-making. We said that the reason there was so much senseless overregulation in Peru was because, in contrast to countries like yours, there were no rule-making procedures. On the average, my country produces 27,400 regula-

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tions a year, of which 27,040 are made by the executive branch and only 360 are in the form of laws made by Congress. So 99 percent of the rules which affect us actually come from the executive branch. There's no control whatsoever over the way the executive branch makes those rules. We have found that it is those rules that create the obstacles. Our plan to reform was essentially to put the rule-making procedures of the executive branch under control of the people to ensure there would be a cost-benefit notion, so that when rules were made they would not obstruct the poor or stop them from being enterprising, or bar them from having easy access to markets and to production facilities. We set up a system that was inspired by mechanisms we found in the informal sector on the one hand, and mechanisms that work in countries such as yours. So we set up, essentially, a rule-making procedure that was, in fact, approved by law. But, as we had warned the president, the moment the reform would go into effect, the vested interests would come and pressure for the system not to be applied *de facto*. So, the system worked for about fifteen days, and then the first vested interest balked at the rules and disobeyed them, and departments started publishing their regulations without going through the rule-making procedure. When we voiced our alarm about this, the president did not take action to stop it. So, we resigned from the commission, admitted our defeat at that level and decided to go and work in the opposition. I do not think that President Garcia, like any Peruvian president, unless pressured, will want to be controlled in this rule-making capacity either. It's awkward. I don't even think that presidents in your country are happy with being controlled. I think it will come about only when public opinion is sufficiently aware that this is where the problem lies and will actually press for that to occur.

KA: You call Peru's economy mercantilist. Why?

HS: It is a term that describes the situation that existed in most of Europe toward the end of the Middle Ages when the right to do business or to have access to rule-making was a privilege of very few people, specifically of privileged merchants who had struck a deal with the state or with the feudal lords or, as in Spain, simply with the lords. Peru and most Latin American countries are in that situation today. In other words, they are in a situation in which the majority of people who want to do business or become entrepreneurs have to do it outside the law, because most of the laws are the result of an agreement or a pact between certain vested interests and the state. That's why we call our type of economy mercantalist, not capitalist.

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It's not a market economy because it's not open; access to it is controlled.

KA: You have spoken very eloquently about the need for legalizing private property, using the idea of private property in more than just the sense of owning a piece of land, but in its larger legalistic sense. What I'm trying to get at is the difference between a mercantilist economy and a market economy where there are legal obligations by government to citizens who are considered property owners.

HS: In Peru, though most people own something or possess something, very few have legal title to their possessions. Only about 30 percent of poor people in Lima, for example, have some form of title to their land; the other 70 percent don't. The right to secure property for the poor has, of course, other consequences than opening the way to economic prosperity. It allows them to defend themselves adequately against various forms of oppression. It brings a sense of realism to political movements. It makes democracy a more orderly and coherent process. Thus, while initially it appears to be only an economic phenomenon, it brings with it important social and political consequences that are essential to furthering democratic institutions and processes.

KA: You have said that it is not enough to suggest new policies in Latin America and other sectors of the third world, but that it is also necessary to confront the ideas that undergird the present systems and to articulate the principles that will constitute the intellectual framework for reforms. Specifically, how would you characterize the mental universe of the past that has created the situation that exists in Peru today, and how would you define the sort of change that would facilitate reforms in the future?

HS: Well, many Latin American intellectuals have seen the poverty in Peru and in other Latin American countries and have said, as you suggested earlier, that their poverty was the result of exploitation from abroad or from lack of initiative. But our observations, not our ideas, show that the primary identifiable causes of our poverty are of our own creation. Until you take away the obstacles that we have described, we feel that we should not blame our poverty on anybody else. Therefore, we think that the people who have had ideas or have had concepts regarding what our poverty is all about have simply not been in touch with facts. What we're hoping to demonstrate through our studies is that they're mistaken, and that there are many real, internal things that can be done to correct this. So, I think it's not more ideas on our side, but more facts on our side which will ac-

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tually change the prevalent ideology of those people who are not in contact with the reality of their own countries.

KA: There were certain ideas that led to the creation of the systems that exist now, which are heavily weighted toward state ownership and state control.

HS: Those ideas were the same ones that were prevalent even in your country three hundred years ago. There was a time in the world when most people actually believed that the only people who had a right to govern and imagine rules and take care of society were those people who had inherited the power to do so, kings, and princes, and the lords, and the wealthy landowners. That was the prevailing ideology of the Western world. So, it is not surprising that it should be prevalent in Latin America and most of the third world. It is the natural state of things.

What's happened since the nineteenth century is that only a few countries, not more than eighteen or twenty, such as yours, have found out that to empower people creates more prosperity and creates more equality. But let me tell you, it's a very revolutionary state of affairs. You're really islands of liberty and democracy in the world. The rest of us are just coming out of our ignorance as facts demonstrate that the old systems can no longer work. What occurred a long time ago in Western Europe was that there were mass migrations towards the cities and that these mercantilist systems could not cope with the multiplicity of desires for consumption and desires to produce. And the market economy and democracy arose as the most viable systems to allow for all of these different wills and desires and energies to coordinate. What's happened in my country is that up to thirty years ago, since most people were still in the countryside and only the minority of Peruvians were in the cities, democracy, if you will, and the market economy were't really deemed an absolute necessity, simply because the third world ran along pretty well for those who were in power with the mercantilist system, but in the course of the last thirty years, as a result of the migrations, our cities have quintupled, and they're no longer manageable.

KA: Isn't there a step missing here between the situation that existed in feudal times and the situation that exists now in Latin American and in many of the African countries—the difference, that is, between the wealthy nobility owning all the land and the property and the state owning all the land and the property, even though the people who control the state bureacracy are usually the wealthy elites? Isn't that difference the result of Marxist ideology?

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HS: I would say that depends on which country you're discussing. But let me repeat, massive state organization with central planning was the old way of governing. Even before Marxism there were overbloated states and bureacracies. But what happens is that it's much easier for someone who has been educated under the old feudal or mercantilist mentality to understand Marxist-Leninist government. A market economy sounds like anarchy to them. As a matter of fact that's what they usually accuse it of, and when it comes to democracy they say it may work very well among Europeans and North Americans who are cultivated and orderly people, like the Japanese, but it won't work among my people who have always needed an iron hand, forgetting that all Europeans once needed an iron hand. The fact is that all people can be governed by democracy in market economies, but it's much easier for an elite to govern the old way. That's why they are much more sympathetic to Marxist-Leninism.

KA: That sounds as if you're advocating the implementation of completely unregulated, laissez-faire markets in Latin America. Are you?

HS: No, I am not. Laissez-faire is impossible. It is nothing more than an ideological cry of war that arises when people find themselves overburdened by regulations, as they did, for example, during the mercantilist period in Europe. Without the protection of government, there are no rights that can be enforced by the courts, and you are continually at risk of being usurped by anybody more powerful than yourself.

KA: What about the debt problem? What should the developing countries themselves be doing with respect to it, and what should we be doing?

HS: Regarding the developing countries, I think they should first try to find out who incurred the debt. In the case of my country, it is very simple. It was the government that incurred the debt. We've seen that it hasn't been able to repay the debt, so it hasn't made very good investments. If that's the case with other developing countries, they should decide whether they're going to let their governments continue to get as uselessly indebted as they are today. Regarding the case of my country, I think there are two good measures to control the debt. The first is to reform the rule-making process. Those rules and contracts made by the state to purchase anything from abroad must be subject to public scrutiny, which they're not now. The president can actually sign away these deals once he's elected as

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if he were Prince Borgia, and, of course, he and the vested interests will sign whatever is convenient for them. So good rule-making, which is understanding that democracy is more than just elections, means participation in the making of rules and the immediate accountability of public officials for all the decisions they make economically; it will greatly minimize the creation of future debt. The next thing is deregulation.

In terms of the developed countries, I really don't have many recommendations for them because I'm personally more concerned with the developing countries. I would simply say that they should make sure that when they call for structural adjustments, they take into consideration these enormous obstacles, instead of giving lip service to principles that are too vague to be useful or understood in the context of developing countries.

KA: A recent U.S. Presidential Task Force Report on Latin America and the Caribbean has made a strong case for encouraging employee stock option plans, that is, for converting inefficient state-owned industries into privatized enterprises owned by the workers. What do you think of this idea?

HS: I think that if people want that to happen, it's terrific. I think that employee stock options or share options have always been one of the alternatives that free enterprise has had to motivate its own people, and where available, it should be used. I don't think it's the only solution, however. I think that if we go throughout Latin America and find out that there are at least 289 days before you can actually set up your own business, there's not only the obstacle of not having access to the shares in your enterprise, there's also the problem of simply being able to do business. If, for example, we look at my country at where there is organized labor that could participate in employee stock ownership, it's less that 5 percent of the population; while if we look at the informal sector, it's more than 60 percent of the population. Therefore, my immediate reaction to what you're saying is that it's very good to have employee ownership programs, but what's needed for the people in my country is simply to be able to own their own businesses to start off with, and the problem there is one of bureacracy and excessive regulation.

KA: President Garcia has recently nationalized the banks in Peru, after much controversy in which the novelist Mario Vargas Llosa felt compelled to involve himself and protest against the nationalization plan. What effect has the nationalization had on future prospects for democracy and economic development in Peru?

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HS: I'm afraid that Mario Vargas Llosa was absolutely right in the action he undertook. His fear was that if government controlled 100 percent of all legal credit, the power of the state would be excessive and that credit, like many other things in Peru that are under the control of the state, would become totally politicized. Prior to the nationalization, at least 20 to 25 percent of the credit was still in private hands and free options were available, so I share his fears. I don't think the state has said anything or done anything that would allay my fears nor his, in the sense that it has not explained how credit is not going to be politicized as a result of the nationalization. So, I don't think that this says much for democracy in the near future.

KA: Liberation theology has become an influential political force in Latin America. Would you discuss its role in the Latin American political climate, and if or how the goals of liberation theology have any parallels with the goals of ILD?

HS: Liberation theology doesn't really say anything new that Marxist-Leninism and dependency theory haven't said before. Essentially, it's a repetition of these philosophies. What is interesting about liberation theology, of course, is that it provides a moral justification for old theories, which haven't worked, and it gives them the credibility that religious faith or the institution of the church would have. If liberation theology were not, as it unfortunately is, attached to Marxist ideas, then I would say that it would not be a bad thing, because I subscribe to the idea that Christians should be conscious of poverty and social injustice. What I don't see is that once you are conscious of that, you should look toward Marxist-Leninism to change it.

KA: I would like you to talk about the role of nationalistic impulses in Latin America and how they tie into certain strains of Marxist ideology.

HS: Well, that's a very good question because I think that behind Marxism and behind dependency theory, there's basically nothing else other than nationalism. That's what it's all about. Nationalism is a way of reaffirming your national identity versus foreign influence. The people who understood that a long time ago are, of course, the Marxist-Leninists, who have tried to tie it to dependency theory. The proof that it is basically nationalism that you're talking about is in the experience we have typically at ILD. Every time we talk about change, we have a lot of former Communists coming in and joining our ranks simply because they feel it's as good an idea as the ones they've heard before, and this indicates that, in terms of Marxist-

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Leninism, they're ideologically soft, that their basic concern is nationalism. Once you prove that you're willing to change things even though it's not using a Marxist-Leninist root, and once you're capable of showing you're nationalistic because you're from your own people and you respect what comes from the informal sector, which is a very Peruvian sector, these people have no ideological hesitations in terms of changing around.

KA: Did you know Raul Prebisch, the Argentinian economist, who, as the head of the Economic Commission on Latin America and the U.N. Commission on Trade and Development, was very influential in disseminating the notions of dependency theory? During the last four years of his life, when he was in his eighties, he changed his mind about dependency theory, and began to put forward arguments similar to those you are making, that the control and role of the state bureacracies in the developing countries were blocking development and had to be reduced.

HS: I met Raul Prebisch on two occasions when I was a very young man, and the conversations must not have exceeded twenty minutes to a half an hour. I'm sure I sympathized with the things he said then, simply because I had no other explanation for poverty. What that indicates, which is something that cannot be ignored, is that none of the intellectuals in Latin America will give up believing in dependency theory unless they have some other kind of explanation for their poverty.

My country, for example, has done for many years a lot of the things the International Monetary Fund has said it should do, without any success. It never had tariffs that exceeded an average of 10 percent. There was a minimum of regulation regarding foreign trade. Peruvians could import and export quite freely. The currency was relatively stable. Elections were being held. People could trade land, and yet the poor were poorer. The rich accumulated most of the real estate and the agricultural wealth in the country, and, as I said, a group of forty families ran the country.

At ILD we have gone back and studied the situation and found out that facilitating development isn't only a matter of having low tariffs or of having a relatively unregulated form of foreign trade; it's also a matter of asking yourself, do the poor really have an opportunity to participate in entrepreneurship and in the decision-making process? We found out that liberalism of the market place is also a matter of finding out how the law affects the poor of your population. It's not enough that foreign investors and the privileged should

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be happy about their competitive economic situation. It's also a question of finding out whether the poor have access to the market, or if they have access to credit, or if they have access to good labor legislation. We found out that, in fact, they don't.

KA: What, in your opinion, are the prospects for the peace plan that President Arias of Costa Rica has proposed for Central America?

HS: I think that all avenues to peace are respectable. Plans are tested in the field, however. Let's see whether the plan works. I wish President Arias the best with this process.

KA: What do you think the United States should be doing with respect to Nicaragua?

HS: I don't really know that much about Nicaragua. I read about Nicaragua in the same way, probably, that most United States citizens do, in general magazines. What I do think, however, that is important, is that a lot of other Nicaraguas are on their way. One of them could be a country such as mine, where already more than 32 percent of the population freely votes Communist, without anyone forcing them to do so.

What I'm most concerned with is in seeing how we can avoid future Nicaraguas, whether in the Philippines, in Peru, in El Salvador, etcetera, and I think a lot of that has to do with how poor people, who are the majority of our country, view the opportunities and the chances they have at happiness and prosperity. What we've indicated through our research is that when they're angry and frustrated, they're absolutely right to be angry and frustrated because they don't have those opportunities.

So I would say that, for the moment, your concern may be Nicaragua, but if you dedicate too much effort to Nicaragua and forget the rest of Latin America, you may find out that five years from now you've got more than one Nicaragua on your hands. You may have close to five or six. So, even though Nicaragua may be a legitimate concern of the United States and all citizens of the world, let's just try to make sure that we don't get that kind of a dictatorship in other Latin American countries, by finding out what caused the Nicaraguas instead of trying to figure out how to get the communists out once they've gone down the drain.

KA: Thank you, Mr. de Soto.

HS: It was my pleasure.

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Péter Esterházy

ON LAZINESS

0.000 Whereon one cannot act, thereon must loaf.
– 1 This is not true.

(First Fiasco) We haven't achieved too much. We are able to surmise whether a person is a *rotten bum* or a *parasitic wretch*, but when caught off guard, we are stern, somewhat feebleminded schoolmasters. "No, no," we wag our index fingers. "*A lazy tramp; a vagrant, a burden for a bed*," and laugh somewhat shyly at our former blindness, thereby engaging ourselves, let's face it, in *tacit complicity*. In fact, we say talented people are inherently lazy. (A statement which we then combine with the assertion, even less true, that lazy means gifted. No doubt, it suffices to remember our slow-witted classmates in school. But "okay, all is well"; those kids only *appeared* to be lazy. *At bottom*. . . . etc., etc., etc. So many italics—*italics*—should make us suspicious.)

There is probably good reason for the ending of La Fontaine's illuminating fable: when the obsessively hardworking ant hears that the indolent violin-player the cricket is planning a concert tour to Paris, the ant begs his neighbor in consideration of their old friendship to vist Mr. La Fontaine and convey the message that he (Mr. La Fontaine) should kiss his (the ant's) arse.

We got what we expected and that means we certainly had it coming. Laziness is an ugly thing, or if it is not, it isn't laziness. Everything is clear.

(In Praise of Laziness) Things are not that easy, however. For the lazy may goof off, kill time, loiter, play truant, trifle, dally, doodle, dawdle, linger, malinger, vegetate, do nothing in what is called life, live in misery, need, want, destitution, penury, privation, fear; they may be anxious, worried, while obviously always comfortably lying around, lounging around, but they are not (not and again not) idling or loafing. For even though the lazy are idle, the idle indolent, the lazy do not idle.

Editor's Note: "On Laziness" is a version of "A lustaságról. Traktátus" in *A Kitömött Hattyú* (*The Stuffed Swan*). © 1988. Magvető Könyvkiadó, Budapest, Hungary.

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So what do they do? Nothing, we answer self-confidently; therefore, they are lazy.

Take it slowly. For what are the unlazy up to? The unlazy are hardworking. The hardworking work. Those who work create the order in which they live. By creating it, they praise it (provided they do not destroy it in the process—but this is unlikely). The lazy are not like that; they do not praise the order.

The lazy keep quiet. Just the way they sit down unsure of themselves and snort. And won't get up, just stare. It is winter but spring will come soon. Only ill-will would describe their stare as glassy. "Bottomless depths," perhaps this phrase could best express their profound philosophical loafing. Nonsense, the lazy keep quiet. They are neither content nor malcontent. Although/indeed, they shamelessly indulge their own laziness.

Their calm leaves them only when they are near the kitchen. The lazy man is an *hors d'oeuvres man:* stuffed meat pies, light pasta, the rare delicacies of the sea, oils, sauces, gravies—stop. Let's not break our hearts. *Aioli! Aioli!*

The lazy are nibblers. Their sneaking about drives even the most magnanimous hostess up the wall. It is they who break off the golden crust of the bread loaf only to bar-ba-rously sop up the rest of the onion gravy. Too lazy to eat, they nibble away. They *nibble in,* on, through, out, back and forth, up and down, after, instead of. Their favorite delicacy is the black burnt peel of baked potatoes. Indeed, it is they who when arriving at a friend's apartment late in the morning glance at their watch and instead of saying hello remark: "*It is oyster time*"; who, when greeted by their friend conjuring up the oysters from the slightly grimy pantry of this slightly grimy Eastern European city, do not bat an eyelash; who, needless to add, ask then uneasy and subtle questions solely about the *appropriate* bottle of champagne. Shortly thereafter, they simply enjoy themselves.

While the lazy are content with little, they are by no means completely unpresuming. In fact, the lazy live for pleasure.

And they have a sweet tooth. Let's not forget that.

Lazy people are a little bit old-fashioned. They kiss women's hands. They like tweed jackets. They are in love with their lovers. Having been ill, they spend an extra day in bed, even though they have no fever. They love food out of vogue such as heavenly rich patés, and believe everything about the effects of truffles on virility. In vain they are warned by their sniggering wives and girlfriends.

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The lazy are men. There are no lazy women.

The lazy are not sluggish or slow. They are not bored. The lazy are as far from ennui as Budapest is from Saturn.

The lazy *give things appropriate emphasis.* Thus, they don't accept the usual, rather they prefer the extraordinary. They try to swim against the tide (without much success though), and refuse to believe "the deceptive noise, the stream of cant" pouring over the loudspeakers. And while they may occasionally feel cheated like everyone else, they, at least sometimes, see things clearly. When in a bad mood, they say they must get things clear to see clearly.

Notwithstanding, even though they are scared, they are not frightened (not even of themselves). They exude a kind of "ontological serenity." Pardon.

If you want to live, do so at your own expense. The lazy know this. Laziness like hard work is cut to measure.

The lazy are not passive, the hardworking are. It is the latter who grow tired, dull, and stiff, who turn into objects, who beg (themselves) for a short break. The lazy don't. They are forever alert, active, prepared for everything. It is they who are open, ingenuous, receptive, always hoping for miracles. It is they who cannot be reckoned with, who aren't programmed, predetermined, quantified, who are rather unpredictable, stimulating, exciting. Laziness means a big chance in life. It is the eternal adventure, the guardian of shimmering, bygone aspirations. It is the lazy who have clear minds, who are incorruptible, who remain true to themselves in this cheaply decorated world. It is they who shrug their shoulders, who don't give a damn, who beg to differ, who can turn pale, who are burdensome, unpleasant, who fume with rage, who are unwilling, who resist, doubt, distrust, stutter, who negate, who are happy, therefore who affirm, who cannot be kept tributary to their talents. It is they who are FREE.

The hardworking are machines, they are cold, stiff, plaster-like, predictable. Space and order.

The lazy are organic, warm, soft. They are soil, independence, landscape, faith.

As ever, we have allowed ourselves to be carried away. After all.

(Inner fiasco) It is said that hell is other people. If this is true, then, we are the lazy ones. Or we would like to be. We are working diligently on it. We have arrived at the right place. For could such a

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beautiful, profoundly lazy man sing the praises of laziness? Certainly not. Just as we could not speak eloquently about our own stuttering. And the lazy do only what they want. And even that not always.

The lazy naturally are too lazy even to demonstrate their laziness. For example, better to admit our own obsession with work than to write condescendingly about the lazy who don't write about laziness because they are lazy. In fact, nothing human is foreign to us (especially when we are personally in question).

(The Hungarian Version) The Hungarian, as we know, is a hot-blooded dashing guy, appropriately, his laziness too is bellicose, cantankerous, and irascible. In our country, it is customary to lose a revolution from time to time. To put it metaphorically, the evils of Austrian oppression catch up with us. In response, Hungarians fly into a mighty rage, "Watch out! *Passive resistance*!" and they make a resolution: whether they live or die as long as this global scandal lasts they will refuse to buy Austrian goods. Indeed, it is only for their family's sake that they will go on breathing at all.

As in the joke, "Sir, you have to have your teeth fixed." "For whom? For Them?"

Thus, all is well. The problem is, however, that while the gorgeous girls inhabiting the world love us as daredevils, when our teeth rot away, the same young ladies sneer and grimace.

At this point, clammy dread grips us. After all, we are serious men, damn it. And we have forgotten our dead brethren, humiliated fathers, dishonored sisters, our own dignity, and turned our rich inheritance into small change. *Indignantly,* we throw ourselves into work.

We work night and day, we hustle from dawn till dusk, until we feel numb. Business moves on, ambles on. Sunday, we are closed. (= joke)

It is difficult to talk about this offense without taking offense because if one could, one wouldn't have anything to talk about.

In this mutually held grudge, we are quick to say, "WE," "we" who suffer collectively from "them," from "these people." No, not collectively. There is no such big we. What I am writing is directed against you also. In vain has Eastern European time carved these creases on your face and on mine and has turned against you and against you too, because you are this, that, and the other.

And me too.

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It is not "they" who are the enemy, but the rigid, arrogant, obese corpse that grows inside us.

Then there is a we again: watch out: the dog bites and let's beware because we push, push, push, and in the end, *nothing remains*. What slips out of our hands is . . . . What is it? Everything (!?!?), because what we see cannot be taken seriously. In fact, it is ridiculous. Yet we have not taken into account that *we are* part of it. . . . And it is no small matter whether or not we perish. Let's believe—no, let me believe, you believe, him/her/it believe, you believe, them believe: *we got it*.

(Final Fiasco) It's evening. After a while, morning will come. And the woman who spent the night with us had gently stroked and smoothed our cold, clammy brow. For as we awoke, our hands and feet grotesquely twitching, we supposedly had muttered (something we of course cannot remember anymore): "I don't want. I don't want to work. I don't want to work."

Be that as it may. I will chase away this dreadful dawn with work. This is still my best solution.

Translated from the Hungarian by Zsuzsanna Ozsváth and Martha Satz

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PARIS LETTERS

I.

CENSORSHIP AT THE BEAUBOURG

I left the recent exhibition on "Censorship" at the Beaubourg considerably disappointed. Its organizing principle appeared to be mere amalgamation; its goal, not reflection, but complacency. It jumbled everything: censorship of the imaginary and censorship of facts, censorship of texts and censorship of images (books by Agnes Rosenstiehl and Leila Sebbar, whose writings had been considered inadvisable for very young children, sat cheek by jowl with *New Look* and *Penthouse* in the same display), prohibitions for children and prohibitions for adults. The assailants of censorship adopted, on the whole, the same stance of assimilation as the censors themselves: denunciation of tortures in Algeria is just as noble (or ignoble) as pornography. One was forced to conclude that the past was an ocean of obscurantism and that we should congratulate ourselves on our narrow escape. Exalted sentences enticed the spectator to self-congratulation. *Liberty can never be stifled:* Diderot. *In spite of the Inquisition, the earth turns*: Galileo. The exhibition catalogue let the cat out of the bag: according to Robert Badinter, former socialist minister of justice and author of the preface, censorship is always, and uniquely, "the expression of intolerance and fear," the battle of "the lover of order and uniformity" against "thought"; long live "the tolerance which grants to the Other's thought its full freedom."

The same debauchery of noble sentiments and dubious amalgamations already had occurred in the spring of 1987, on the occasion of the "Pasqua exhibition," dedicated to violence and pornography (named so after the minister of internal affairs at that time, who belonged to the Right). The newspaper *Libération* had taken advantage of the event to inform us that our essential civil liberties were threatened. Fortunately, in 1857 the censor condemned *Les Fleurs du mal:* this proves the injustice of today's interdiction imposed on *L'écho des savanes*, suggested D. Filipacchi, whose company publishes that pornographic magazine and several others like it: although what they have in common with Baudelaire is not genius, but misogyny. The vice president of the same company, F. Ténot, goes even further: to prosecute pornographers today is like hunting down Jews yesterday (Pasqua reminds him of Darquier de Pelle-

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poix, the director of Jewish affairs in France during World War II); both are poor, defenseless victims (it's not clear what would have been the equivalent for the Jews of the juicy profits the editors of these mass circulation magazines reap). Jack Lang, former socialist minister of culture, invoked Rabelais, the Cathedral of Bourges, and Picasso to justify the practices of the Filipacchi press (famous, as everybody knows in France, for their initiatives on behalf of pure art and avant-garde aesthetics!), forgetting that there might be a distinction between art and business: if *New Look* (another porn magazine) has moved these days to "softer" images, it's not in the name of artistic integrity, but because marketing showed that such images are more profitable.

Freedom and Power

One image, however, in the "Censorship" exhibition prompted at least one question. It showed young people burning newspapers and posters of the Organisation Armée Secrète (the terrorist right-wing movement that fought for French Algeria) in a demonstration in Paris in 1962. The strange thing is that it appeared (as amalgamation requires) in a series of images showing burned books, from the *auto-da-fés* of the Inquisition to the public burnings organized by the Nazis. And yet, the meaning of the first image could not be the same as that of the others, since burning, here, was to liberate, not to oppress. The exhibition catalogue presents, moreover, another series of similar photographs: men in Budapest in 1956 burning books by Lenin and portraits of Stalin, in the midst of a number of Soviet flags. On whose side would he be, here, the one who, to take up Badinter's formula again, does not grant to the Other's thought its full freedom? Was Stalin an Other, for the Hungarian workers?

"What is this power attributed by the censors to the written word, field of the imaginary, in its transfer to reality?" affirms—rather than asks—the text of one of the displays in the exhibition. But it is not only the censors who presume this power; all of us who write presume it, at least in our moments of euphoria, and many of our readers do the same; in fact, there are many bridges between the imaginary and the real. A word is a deed, and as such can serve the best or the worst. Under the guise of propaganda (of state or party), it can lead to violence or slavery; under the guise of "entertainment" or advertisement, it can produce stupefaction. To defend oneself

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against these actions is legitimate, even if fire is not the best method: this is what explains the *auto-da-fés* in the streets of Budapest as well as of Paris.

How could it be otherwise? Only a political illiterate could believe the greatest freedom for all a sufficient principle for the regulation of life in society. Since we live in community, our actions—even solitary ones—produce effects on others; if nothing controls this communal life, only force will count. Now, the freedom of the strongest means the absence of freedom for the weak: it's the same old story of the fox free in the chicken coop. Freedom for rapists equals the submission of the raped. Or, to return to the various forms of expression: If my neighbor has the irrepressible freedom to slander me, I am no longer free to walk in the street without blushing. If the purveyors of prostitution rings (another French specialty) by Minitel are free to cover the walls of my city with posters of tortured women or with women reduced to consumer objects, I am no longer free to stroll without seeing them or to prevent my children from internalizing this image. Democracy implies the existence of a general will, which is *restrained* by the freedom of each citizen to do what he wants only insofar as it doesn't concern anyone else; it is unacceptable to elevate this limited freedom into an exclusive principle of action.

An unexpected episode shook the confidence of the exhibition's organizers: a group of "Faurissonians" (those who deny the existence of the gas chambers and of the "final solution" to the "Jewish problem") came to paste their posters and tracts right on the walls of the exhibition. Far from rejoicing in this eruption of marginality, in this spontaneous manifestation of the thought of the Other, the director of the Beaubourg Library, with the help of his staff and several visitors who had come to admire this celebration of free speech, rushed to tear down the posters. A brawl broke out, and a complaint was lodged, not, as Badinter had suggested, in the name of intolerance and fear, but because racial hatred was incited. This hostile reaction (which the organizers of the exhibition had not foreseen) seemed perfectly natural to me: like innumerable other words, these tracts and posters constitute an action, and it is normal to oppose it. I am not, however, in favor of censorship of these publications, since I fear it would only reproduce the "Baudelaire effect" (prohibited, therefore good); but this trend apparently has already started.

The Freedom of Artists

In a recent interview (*London Review of Books*, March 5, 1987),

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Philip Roth observes that many people in the West secretly envy the persecutions suffered by writers in the East, "It's as though without an authoritative environment, imaginative possibilities are curtailed and one's literary seriousness is open to question." And he goes on to say, "There is, however, a looming American menace that evokes its own forms of deprivation and suffering, and that's the creeping trivialization of everything in a society where freedom of expression is anything but compressed."
For his part Kasimierz Brandys, a Polish writer living in Paris, declares, "Oppression maddens, but freedom stupefies."

What is the point of these quips? Does freedom of expression have some secret defect? Even leaving aside the inducement—represented by all prohibition—to express oneself by metaphor and allegory, by insinuation and allusion (persecution refines the art of writing), the gist is perfectly obvious. In Western democracies, writers are, of course, free to write what they want—but it's not clear that this fact should provoke unreserved jubilation: it is only the result of the lack of interest of the society in its writers. The individual has attained his autonomy; but the reverse side of this attainment is that he means nothing to his society, that it has no need of him; he can say what he likes, but no one listens. In communist countries, on the other hand, the very existence of censorship proves that what writers say counts; furthermore, they enjoy an enviable popularity (the comparison of the number of copies sold of a book of poetry should suffice to dampen the spirits of the Western poet most enthusiastic about freedom).

In fact, things are a bit more complicated. In Eastern countries, the writer can choose between three roles, with infinite numbers of intermediary positions between them. There is, in the first place, the official role. The relationship between the State and the writer is in this case very strong, but it is imposed by the State. The latter gives a great deal (writers are privileged; they earn inflated honoraria; they benefit from protected sinecures and special vacation retreats; statesmen cultivate their friendship and respect their advice), but it also demands much in return (the obligation, not only not to say what one must not, but—which is worse—to say what one must). The second role is that of dissidence; here again the bond to the surrounding world is very strong, except that the writer allies himself no longer with the State but with the invisible and yet perfectly real civil society. If he has no official rewards, he has the sensation, how vastly consoling, of having become the voice of the people.

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Finally, the third role is that of the pure artist: like the dissident, he doesn't glorify the State; but, like the official writer, he avoids disparaging it; those are not the terms by which he defines himself. He writes for himself, for art and for eternity; in practice, he tends to speak of the past and (or) of private life. Because of this he is marginal, but in the long run honesty pays: he is admired by all.

Confronting this "triangle," the situation in the West nevertheless doesn't reduce itself to a single point—that of the isolated individual who writes to whom no one pays attention; such an image is contradicted by another phenomenon, that of the "consecration of the writer," (the title of a beautiful book by Paul Bénichou) which has been developing since the eighteenth century, and in the course of which the intellectual has replaced the priest. It is true that when culture is ruled only by the market economy, society has some difficulty articulating standards for artists. It is still the case, however, that the countries of the West are neither as atomized, nor as deprived of shared values, as modern nihilists like to proclaim. But these values are of a special kind. Whereas in ideocracies (let us use that term for both ancient theocracies and modern totalitarian states) the adage reigns supreme—truth is one, error multiple—it's just the opposite in democracies. Here, only error can be agreed upon by consensus (it's what the laws condemn), while each is free to seek the good for himself. If someone finds it in alcohol or in heroin we are not to be unduly excited. What is affirmed, therefore, is the form, not the substance: the limits of the private realm. On the same principle, no doctrine is prohibited because of its content, except one which would impede the free circulation of doctrines and replace debate with violence. We must, on the other hand, oppose the latter: if the Weimar Republic had done so, it could have prevented the rise of the Nazis.

At this point, it is time to clear up the misunderstanding which holds that the disapproval of certain texts or images is inherently reactionary and "rightist." A journalist of *L'evenement de jeudi* (a weekly of the center) imagined two possible responses to the Pasqua exhibition: "*1)* to pass myself off as a woman of the Left, say that it's scandalous [censorship], reeking of the Gestapo, and that I'll go right off and sign a bloody petition for the rights of man; *2)* take responsibility for, accept, the dose of Right slumbering in me, admit that what I've seen [pornography] is putrid." What a bizarre present to offer to the Right: the exclusive defense of democratic values! Isn't being on the side of justice against sheer force (in this case, the force of the Filipacchi gang's millions) a value worth defending? As for the rights

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of man (and, we may suppose, of women): Are they best defended by signing petitions granting businessmen the "freedom" to stuff their wallets or by protesting the outrage to which women are subjected every day?

In occidental democracies the writer more than other members of the society is not an entirely isolated individual, and thus irresponsible; rather, he lives between the two poles, solitude and solidarity; and this line of tension is preferable to the "triangle" of the East (the State must emanate from the society rather than be in constant conflict with it). Some evenings, says Adam Zagajewski, it's a true dilemma: listen to the BBC or to Brahms? Or, for the more active among us: participate in political action or write a symphony?

It's probably an alternation between the two, rather than the exclusion of one or the other, which is the preferable solution: to feel myself a member of a community frees me from selfish illusions; but sinking into myself and my art encourages me to fight off the clichés floating all around me. The alternation can also be determined by the rhythm of History. Dostoevsky imagined a poet who, the day after the Lisbon earthquake, in the midst of the still-smoking rubble, wrote a poem entirely concerned with the flutings of the nightingale and the rippling of the brook, and—what's more—without a single verb. Dostoevsky feared, for this poet, a hardly enviable fate: the citizens putting him to death on the spot, and he couldn't bring himself to blame them. This didn't prevent Dostoevsky from admiring the poem in question: fortunately, the earth doesn't quake every day, even in Lisbon.

Tsvetan Todorov

Translated from the French by Rosanna Warren

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II.

"THE FRENCH REVOLUTION IS DEAD"

It may finally be dawning on that shrinking class of Americans still alert to European intellectual developments that, over the past ten or fifteen years, something remarkable has been taking

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place in France. Paris is not what it was: it is, for the first time within living memory, a city without Marx. One begins to read this in the States and to hear it from friends with French connections, but it takes some months of following the French scene up close to realize just how massive the change in sentiment has been. An American confronting it for the first time will, understandably, suspect its authenticity, unaccustomed as he is to political consensus among intellectuals. We are all so habituated to the ideological Wars of Religion that have dragged on since Vietnam that we are incapable of imagining peace breaking out, as seems to have happened in France. A transformation of this order is simply beyond our grasp: it would be as if *Commentary*, *The New Republic*, *The New York Review of Books*, and *The Nation* were to issue a joint declaration of human rights. It is unthinkable.

The shock of the new is even stronger if one is familiar with academic francophilia in the United States. The common professor, relying as he does on university press translations of books published five or ten years ago in France, still believes it to be a land dominated by the giants of the postwar left—by the great social historians grouped around the *Annales*, or by that undefinable constellation of radical thinkers the French simply call "the '68ers." One can still encounter sad-eyed American graduate students in Parisian libraries or cafés, clutching their paperback copies of Deleuze, Foucault, Derrida, or Lyotard, hoping to absorb some of this radical atmosphere and work it into their theses. Alas, they were misinformed. No one seems to have told them that what is now called *la pensée '68* lost its allure some time ago in Paris. Derrida himself is now forced to spend more of his time in the United States, where, as he defensively explained in a *Nouvel Observateur* interview last year, "the debates are richer and more open."

Yet of course it has been here in Paris—not in New York or Washington, Cambridge or New Haven—that something resembling rich, open intellectual debate began to reappear after the shocks of '68. The sources of this reawakening are many, as *Partisan Review* readers learned in the judicious account recently given by Dominique Schnapper ("The Politics of French Intellectuals,"*PR* 2, 1988). As she has explained, the publication of Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag* books in the mid-1970s, along with the gradual realization of the Cambodian horrors, had an effect on French intellectuals that was never reproduced in Germany, Britain, Italy, or America. Marxism of any variety, whether Sartrean, post-, Freudian, or feminist, be-

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gan to seem intellectually and, yes, morally suspect after these revelations. (Why it took them this long—after having rejected the testimony of Arthur Koestler, Gustav Herling, and countless others—is a question the French have yet to confront.)

As we in the United States are well aware, the crumbling of Marxist orthodoxy need not necessarily regenerate intellectual energies. But in France it did. Over the past ten years Paris has welcomed a number of new magazines and thinkers, all antitotalitarian and anticommunist (the two finally being equated), but otherwise quite fresh and various. We simply cannot compare our magazines of the same political tendencies to the breadth and seriousness to be encountered in *Le Débat*, *Commentaire*, *La Liberté de l'Esprit*, and the renovated *Esprit*. And if no giants dominate the scene as Aron and Sartre once did, the new atmosphere has allowed other, less engaged thinkers to stand out. The most important French historian today, for example, is not Fernand Braudel but François Furet, whose revisionist history of the Revolution and its aftermath has made all French intellectuals in this history-drunk land confront their own troubled liberal tradition. Political and moral philosophy once again seem possible, now that intellectuals have crept out from Marx's shadow; for them, a respectable ethics and politics must be based on a defense of human rights, and whether they lean slightly left or right their inspiration today is that other German, Immanuel Kant. (French Kantians—think of it!) The works of Luc Ferry and Alain Renault are the best in this line, but again, like Furet's books, they have yet to find an American audience.[1]

Do I exaggerate? After all, many members of the old and new left still control the highest positions in the French academy, and some are still card-carrying Party members. These positions, in such a centralized country, in turn mean tremendous patronage powers, which are ruthlessly employed. Yet one finds, as has often been the case in France before, that the real center of intellectual life is not to be found at the apex of the institutional pyramid. The intellectual "avant-garde," one might say, has moved on. What makes this latest movement perhaps difficult for many Americans to understand and to accept is that, for the very first time, the avant-garde is not radical but liberal.

1. A translation of *La pensée '68* by Luc Ferry and Alain Renault will be published this fall by the University of Massachusetts Press.

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It might be asked, however, whether this new, liberal consensus among the intellectuals is reflected in—or perhaps even a product of—a more profound "liberalization" of French political life. The French themselves are posing this question, and on the surface at least the answer seems to be "yes." For once the headlines tell the story: in 1981 Mitterrand is elected on a common program with the Communist Party and embarks on a traditional socialist program of wealth taxes and nationalization; after many failures and retreats on this ground, the coalition breaks down in 1984 over massive public demonstrations against government attempts to control private and religious education; parliamentary elections in 1986 give the center-right parties a working majority, Communist votes are at a record low, and Mitterrand is forced to "cohabitate" with Prime Minister Jacques Chirac and his free-market liberal cabinet. Running for re-election in 1988, Mitterrand no longer presents himself as head of a leftist coalition but as *Tonton* (Uncle), leader of what he repeatedly calls *la France unie*; the French voter takes him at his word, reelecting him as president while refusing to give any coalition a majority in the parliamentary elections that follow. Mitterrand then names as prime minister a center-leaning socialist, Michel Rocard, whose task it now is to deliver the promised *ouverture* by forming parliamentary majorities day-by-day, issue-by-issue. At the moment the president must sleep in a centrist bed of his own making.

But can one really consider the recent votes and the subsequent *ouverture* to the parties as reflections of a deeper social consensus? Or are they rather signs of a vacuum at the center, and of a new instability in French politics? Dominique Schnapper spoke for many French skeptics in her latest "Letter from Paris" when she reviewed the recent presidential elections (*PR* 3, 1988). Her main concern, and that of many French commentators, was the strong showing of the far-right xenophobe Jean-Marie Le Pen of the National Front (FN), who received nearly fifteen percent of the vote in the first turn, attracting an odd mix of Catholic integrists, freelance immigrant-haters, and ex-Communists. But Le Pen and what he seemed to represent appear far less threatening than they did a year ago. In the parliamentary elections held in June the FN managed to retain only one of its thirty-two seats in the National Assembly, a precipitous and rather unexpected decline.

The party's slide became willful self-destruction last fall when Le Pen himself led a purge of his party that drove even his one re-

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maining parliamentary representative out into the wilderness. The trouble began with a simple, if brutal, pun that slipped off Le Pen's lips during a speech. Asked to comment on Mitterrand's approach to centrist parties, Le Pen chose to attack the minister placed in charge of the *ouverture*. Playing off the minister's name, Durafour, Le Pen sarcastically referred to him as "*Monsieur Durafour-Crematoire.*" (A *four-crematoire* is a crematory oven.) Given Le Pen's documented anti-Semitic past and his recent claims that the Holocaust was a mere "detail" of World War II, the response to this latest outrage was immediate and universal. The parties of the right refused all future cooperation with the FN in the approaching local elections, robbing Le Pen of the chance to revive his party locally after its national setbacks. As a result, the cantonal elections held in October reflected rather weak FN support (except in some troubled regions) and Le Pen himself has been momentarily driven from the public stage. There may be a future challenge to the admittedly fresh centrism of the French electorate, but Jean-Marie Le Pen is unlikely to lead it.

Yet these short-term developments on the party landscape are probably not the best measure of the slower, deeper transformations that have been easing France towards the political center. A book just published by François Furet and two colleagues makes this point forcefully by placing the Mitterrand years at the end of three different epochs, beginning respectively with the Revolution, the founding of the Third Republic (1870), and the end of World War II. The book's title is the best summary of its conclusions: *La république du centre: La fin de l'exception française*. This "exceptionalism," according to Furet, was the burden French republicanism had to carry since its birth, first by overcoming monarchism and the Catholic Church in the nineteenth century, then by rejecting Marxist challenges to its legitimacy in this century. The tenure of François Mitterrand, seen in this light, is a sign that both those challenges have been successfully overcome and that, to repeat Furet's now famous phrase, "*la revolution française est terminée.*" Whatever disturbing radical or Poujadist movements develop on the margins of French political debate, they are just that—marginal distractions, and not real challenges to republican legitimacy. France has finally joined the unquestionably republican company of Great Britain and the United States, and whether the French like it or not (and it is not clear that they do), "French politics has lost its theatrical dimension."

Déjà vu? One strains not to draw comparisons with similar predictions of American tranquility made in the 1960s, but the

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French themselves are wading fearlessly into their own "end of ideology" debate. There is, however, a spirit of millenarianism beneath this discussion that distinguishes it from our own, for all French intellectual debate lives today in the shadow of the upcoming revolutionary bicentenary. Referring explicitly to this anniversary, the author of the book's preface writes that "if history is, as Michelet says the complete resurrection of the past, anniversaries are its burial." Yet more than millenarianism is at work here. In 1988 the French also "celebrated," if that is the word, the anniversary of three other, less glorious events that make the contrast between early twentieth century French politics and the situation today even sharper. In books, essays, and television documentaries—and often with remarkable frankness—the French confronted the fiftieth anniversary of the 1938 Munich Accords, the fortieth anniversary of the Fourth Republic's dissolution and the creation of the Fifth in 1958, and the twentieth anniversary of the 1968 uprisings. This more recent history, one of shame and instability, is also being interred, along with the ideological passions that gave rise to it.

* * *

This long march toward the center now nearly over for intellectuals, politicians, and apparently the general public, one would expect to find long-suffering French liberals pleased with what they have achieved. Marxism is so absent from respectable intellectual discourse today that, as Luc Ferry and Alain Renault have recently written, one almost fears a nostalgic revival. The Communist Party, once the permanent horizon of French politics for many, now seems to be passing over it, forever. The Catholic Church certainly poses no challenge to the liberal order, and while the nationalistic right is a nuisance, it poses no active threat. The French liberals seem to be living an American neoconservative fantasy, in a country that has come to accept moderate political debate at home and an antitotalitarian defense of human rights abroad. They should be quite content, right?

Wrong. The current mood among French liberals, old-fashioned and born-again alike, is one of unmitigated gloom that begins in politics and spreads into every crevice of contemporary culture. They are certainly hung over, as all the French are, from the apparently endless cycle of voting that began last year: two turns in the presidential elections, two for the National Assembly, two for the

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cantonal races, a referendum on the New Caledonia treaty, and now two more local elections—nine votes in under a year. They also seem depressed by the emptiness of this endless campaigning, by Mitterrand's naked use of nationalistic symbols to mask his program of personal ambitions, by the right's inability to put forward an attractive candidate, and by the new media tactics employed by all the parties.

But the dissatisfaction goes much deeper than electoral politics; it reflects the fact that the high drama of French intellectual politics is disappearing, and with it the caffeine- and nicotine-enhanced thrill of polemical battle. Even the more serious liberals whom one would expect to defend the current ideological cease-fire now find themselves disappointed with what they have wrought. Pierre Manent, an editor of *Commentaire*, recently wrote in his own magazine that he fears "a new orthodoxy of the center." Pierre Rosanvallon, in his essay in *La république du centre*, goes further, disdaining the "angelic celebrations of national unity and consensus" heard during the recent campaigns, concluding that "the vacuous thinking found in this vacuum is no accident: it is to the flabby politics of the '80s what Marxism was to the ideological politics of the '60s and '70s: background music." And wherever one turns today the same phrase is repeated: "*Les droits de l'homme ne sont pas une politique.*"

Well, yes, one is tempted to say. Denouncing totalitarianism and reciting the rights of man is neither a political theory nor a policy. François Furet himself has criticized the now universal French practice of wrapping one's views in "the flag of human rights," a gesture that erases the greater responsibility to specify which rights are to be defended first, and how. But Furet is not scratching any deeper metaphysical itch when reproving this shallow human-rights liberalism; his concern, shared by his coauthors, is that the current consensus on the priority of human rights masks a more troubling new individualism among the French that prevents them from critically reconsidering their republican institutions. Even if the will to have a centrist republic is there, Furet and company are not at all sure that French political and social institutions can deliver it. Taking his cue from Tocqueville, whom he has labored so long to revive, Furet wants to redirect French attention away from a habitual repetition of principles and programs (yesterday class struggle, today human rights), and towards more sober reflection on the unintended consequences of political action.

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Yet this sober, mature message is being drowned out at the moment by a melancholic nostalgia that does not respond to argument; it is a mood, something in the air. One began to feel it as early as 1987, in such books as Alain Finkelkraut's *La défaite de la pénsée* and Bernard-Henri Levy's *Eloge des intellectuels*, which carried the familiar refrain—familiar, that is, to American ears—that serious intellectual and political debate was being drowned out by a barrage of media images and fast-food culture. (Allan Bloom's book, published simultaneously in France as *L'âme désarmée*, only confirmed this French self-denunciation.) The adjective most frequently used by intellectuals today is "media-tized": politics has been *médiatisé*, sex has been *médiatisé*, even the life of letters has been irreversibly *médiatisé* by the press and by relatively serious television shows like "Apostrophe" and "Océaniques." Now, many of these criticisms are true, or, as is the case when the state of French art is lamented, have been true for quite some time. But somehow the French are convinced that their malaise is bound up with the cooling of the old passions, the disappearance of the familiar ideological lines, the arrival of consumer affluence, and the birth of normal, republican, horsetrading politics. And not just life has lost its savor: one important French liberal even tried to convince me that French cooking has been ruined under Mitterrand.

An American coming fresh upon this scene hardly knows how to respond. He has heard so many of these arguments before—over "our country, our culture," over "the end of ideology"—that he must once again struggle to remember the answers. If anything, he will envy the French this moment. However banal the latest French elections may have seemed, they cannot have approached the level of the latest American campaigns. However *médiatisé* Parisian intellectual life has become, it still reflects the fact that writers and thinkers are held in an esteem unimaginable in the States. And to be released from the old, dreary ideological disputes (even for new dreary ones) sounds like a utopian fantasy to anyone reared on the intrigues of American intellectuals and professors. Yet when Franz-Olivier Giesbert, editor of the formerly leftist magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur*, recently left his post to become editor of the daily newspaper of the right, *Le Figaro*, this was not taken as a sign of intellectual and ideological progress on both sides. Instead, it was almost universally regarded as yet another symptom of the French malaise.

One tries hard not to dramatize what is, after all, an already melodramatic mood. And one can hardly blame the French for turn-

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ing up their noses at the latest products of popular culture, a healthy instinct American intellectuals have all but lost. But it is nonetheless disturbing to see the French placing much of the blame for their current *angoisse* on a liberal political consensus they have only just recently achieved. "The empty center" the French keep lamenting is both the great political achievement and great cultural weakness of liberal republics; Americans have come to accept that emptiness or, in the past at least, simply went to Europe to flee it. But the French, sensing perhaps that they have nowhere else to flee, are already beginning to consider the frightening possibility that the center might actually hold. What then? A friend of mine once quipped that the French are always looking for saviors, who must be either very short (Napoleon) or very tall (De Gaulle). Is this what the centrist French intellectual wants today, someone to lead him out of the land of the Average Build?

Reflecting on these frustrations, however mild and premature they seem at the moment, cannot but send one into deeper waters. One thinks of the bitter and still continuing debates here over the Heidegger case—not of the disagreements over fundamental ontology or whether Heidegger paid his Nazi dues, but of liberal deathwish and the political seduction of intellectuals unsatisfied with democratic life. There was an element of that in French defenses of Heidegger (and not just on the left), a sense that, however despicable Heidegger's behavior, it is still an intellectual duty to guard the flame of his contempt for bourgeois liberalism. The French, of course, are not yet contemptuous of their new liberalism, just a little disappointed with the grayness that seems to accompany it. They say they are prepared to accept Jean-François Revel's challenge to live without Marx or Jesus, but one wonders if they really can.

Mark Lilla

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Karen Wilkin

AT THE GALLERIES

Much of what passes for painting or sculpture these days is conceptual art dished up as object. Physical, even visual properties matter less than the sociological or political messages that can be read into these works; indeed, they frequently take the form of elaborately presented messages or texts. Images are, as often as not, "appropriated" from sources just obscure or outrageous enough to make the viewer feel pleased at catching the reference, juxtaposed arbitrarily enough to allow him to make up his own story. Idea (whether the artist's or the viewer's) is paramount. Interestingly, despite Walter Benjamin's fears that works of art might be diminished by mechanical reproduction, this visual-conceptual art usually looks fine in photographs, sometimes better than in actuality. On occasion, being face to face with the object is not appreciably different from seeing it reproduced or reading about it.

To judge by what fills the art magazines, visual-conceptual art generates a large amount of supportive writing, perhaps because almost anything can be attached to it. The more explanation or free association, the more "explication" a work provokes, the better it is judged to be. But there is still serious painting and sculpture being made that does not lend itself to this kind of discussion. Not only does this kind of art resist explication, it resists reproduction; it depends not on ideas transmittable by language or photography, but on firsthand experience of the object itself. It derives from unfashionable faith in the ability of art to affect us profoundly without recourse to the nonvisual. For those of us who still believe in this sort of thing, the winter season at the New York galleries provided both affirmation and reason to question: Jules Olitski's and Helen Frankenthaler's exhibitions at André Emmerich Gallery, for example. Olitski has been working inventively for close to thirty years, yet he is usually discussed in terms of his glowing paintings of the 1960s, works that married an individual, romantic sense of color to a conception of the picture as a seamless expanse that derived, in part, from Pollock. Olitski owes much to Pollock (and to Rembrandt and Monet, among others), but his art has always explored a territory of his own between the intangibility of sight and the materiality of paint. Even his most disembodied sprayed pictures of the sixties, in-

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spired by his much-quoted desire "to have color hover in the air," made boundaries and finiteness crucial. Robust edge drawing defined the limits of these paintings, insistently restating the exact size and proportion of the haze of color miraculously held before us and making us aware that no matter how diaphanous these paintings appeared to be, they were discrete objects made by a particular individual. Olitski's new pictures are so ephemeral, so elusive, so radiant that they test the limits of perception. As an architect friend said at first viewing, "You can't believe you're actually seeing them." And at the same time, they are sturdily, unignorably present.

During much of the last decade, Olitski avoided the lush color of his early work, emphasizing instead tone and texture. Worked surfaces of creamy monochromes or a range of extraordinary greys often replaced the saturated hues once integral to his painting. But not long ago, Olitski began experimenting with the reflective surfaces of colored and mirrored plastic, a potentially garish material that seems to have released in him new ways of thinking about painted color. His recent pictures are more subtly colored than was habitual a few years ago. They take full advantage of what state of the art acrylic paint can do, with its perlescence and interference colors that change according to the angle from which light strikes them. It takes time for the eye to adjust to Olitski's color, unstable and seductive as the rainbow hues of mother of pearl; pictures that first appear monochromatic become complex orchestrations of silvery pastels after concentrated viewing.

The new pictures are also more substantial than ever before. Olitski's nacreous color seems to emanate from his thick paint, applied to the canvas in broad swipes like giant paw marks. Since the slabs of color appear to have been applied incrementally, the painting becomes a rhythmically measured expanse of luminous units, each intimately related to what surrounds it, but each with its own character. In some pictures, each slab has its own color, within a narrow range, while in others, a single hue dominates, making the inflected drawing within the slabs even more eloquent.

Olitski's new paintings are totally twentieth century objects as dependent on modern day plastics technology for their tactile, optical, and, in some ways, their evocative properties as Venetian painting of the Renaissance was on the technology of oil paint in the sixteenth century. Yet despite their material currency, Olitski's recent work has stronger associations with Old Master painting than with the work of most of his contemporaries. His flickering lights and

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darks have been described as an abstraction of Rembrandt's chiaroscuro; the intensity and solemnity of Olitski's newest work, along with its moonstruck color, calls up memories of late Titian.

It is fashionable to decry abstract painting like Olitski's as empty and merely for the eye, as though absence of specific reference equalled absence of deep thought or passion. But Olitski's paintings, without looking like anything but themselves, call up an infinity of associations, a wealth of emotional challenges. They offer, too, a profound commentary on the traditon of painterly painting—the comparison with Titian is not random—without appropriation of images and without texts. They don't lend themselves to explication; they simply demand to be seen. For anyone who paid attention, the resonance and authority of Olitski's December exhibition should have been evident.

The Frankenthaler exhibit that followed was equally powerful, the first event in what promises to be the Frankenthaler year. Abrams has just published a monograph with literally hundreds of excellent color reproductions and an illuminating text by John Elderfield, and a retrospective exhibition is promised for June at the Museum of Modern Art. Frankenthaler has been a painter to be reckoned with since the 1950s, when she began showing as a prodigy in her early twenties. Critics in those chest-beating, male-dominated days sometimes resorted to praising her transparent stain paintings, slightly condescendingly, for their lyricism and femininity. The notion that she is primarily a lyrical painter has been as persistent as the idea that her importance lies in having been a pivotal figure in the transition from Abstract Expressionism to the color-based abstraction of Olitski and his colleagues Kenneth Noland and Morris Louis, a role characterized by Louis's famous description of Frankenthaler as "the bridge between Pollock and what was possible." As her January exhibition made clear, there's a lot more to Frankenthaler than that.

The range of moods, temperatures, and tempi in her recent work was almost more noticeable than the particularities of individual paintings. Frankenthaler has never had a single way of making a picture, nor has she worked in defined series, although family resemblances exist between paintings. Over the years, she has evolved a personal lexicon of "moves" as distinctive as her signature: pools of color that seem simultaneously to have found their own shapes and to have been willed by a forceful personality, clots of thick paint, fluid lines, intimate fingertip touches. But each

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painting seems freshly conceived and intuitively produced. Her recent works ranged from a superheated crimson canvas, like an echoing chord, to a tumble of springtime pale shapes, like an updated version of her celebrated *Mountains and Sea* of 1952, to a looming near-black picture with staccato touches of color that managed to be both serious and playful. Frankenthaler can load a canvas to the limit or pare it down to a skeleton. She can be dramatic, somber, witty and yes, lyrical. And she remains a splendid colorist. In *The Widow of Fantin-La Tour*, for example, she played frothy pale mauves and murky grey-greens against a velvety brown expanse and then subverted this subtle harmony with an audacious hit of acid green.

Frankenthaler often speaks of the importance of her early grounding in Cubism; she feels that the spatial flux of Cubist planes is at the heart of her work. It is more apparent than ever, in her new paintings, that her ravishing—or abrasive—color, her drawing, her floods and clots of pigment establish zones of space as much as they tug at one another across the canvas. The saturated, relatively uninflected sheets of color that serve as "backgrounds" in her recent work put this kind of space-making at risk. A single color, if too dominant, can flatten the entire picture. As a result, touch counts as much as color or placement; nuances of surface can "make" a picture or throw it off. It was exhilarating to see Frankenthaler taking these risks, in her pursuit of expressiveness and of what she calls "the wrong thing that makes it all right." Watching her successful passage along this high wire is part of the pleasure of her best new work.

Darby Bannard and Darryl Hughto's January exhibits offered opportunities to see how the tradition of Olitski and Frankenthaler has fared lately. Bannard, a contemporary of Frank Stella's, is known as much for his straightforward, insightful criticism as he is for his paintings, but he has always been primarily a practitioner, not a theoretician. He was a recipient of a Greenburger Award for painting in 1986. Bannard obviously trusts the expressive possibilities of process—the making of each picture is always revealed in his work—and his intelligence, his grasp of theory is always manifest. But good as individual paintings have been all along, a series could look dangerously like systematic exploration of a set problem. When Bannard let his intuition loose, his pictures were the better for it: quirkier, more personable and more energetic.

The paintings in his show at Greenberg-Wilson were among his most intuitive to date and among his more spontaneous, relaxed

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and unexpected. *Aurora* was the star of the show, a brushy sweep of metallic grey over flesh tone, with a driving energy along its eighteen-foot length that belied the delicacy of its drawing and the lacy lingerie connotations of the color. Bannard's overscaled "stroke" skips and misses, creating loose units that read as floating planes. It's a 1980s version of Cubism, an explosion of planes made not by tight rendering, but by excavation and by the varying pressure of a single stroke. In Bannard's small pictures, the implied geometry of the large paintings is more explicit. Their blocky compositions seem tightly contained by their small formats, as though the pressures that burst forth in *Aurora* were building at small scale.

I doubt very much that Bannard is deliberately reexamining Cubist ideas. (He is surely not appropriating Cubist motifs.) But he is clearly rethinking preconceptions of flatness and space, concentrating on that region between the fact of paint and the mystery of illusion. Bannard's show was strong and satisfying, but it also made me curious about what will come next.

Darryl Hughto's survey exhibition at Salander-O'Reilly Galleries not only revealed where he is going, but indicated where he has been, at least since 1975. Like Bannard and Olitski, Hughto is absorbed by the material characteristics of his medium. He is a virtuoso who fully exploits the transparencies, opacities, thickness, matteness and shininess of modern day acrylic; even his peculiar, edgy color is possible principally because of what acrylic paint can do.

In the 1970s, Hughto explored neutral, deductive formats, inserting ovals and diamonds within the rectangle of his canvas to set up complex relationships of edges, zones of color and paint surfaces. While the selection at Salander-O'Reilly was limited, it was nonetheless possible to chart how Hughto's probing of the interplay of interior and exterior led him to reconsider the shape of the canvas itself. In his more recent work, what happens inside the picture seems to determine the shape of the whole, yet important as shape can be, color is perhaps the most critical factor in many pictures. *Forever Amber*, 1978, was one of the best in the show, because of its cranky, offset diamonds, its unpredictable edges and particularly because of its deceptively simple palette of "off" red and green set against a warm, honey-colored ground, like a Tuscan wall.

About four years ago, Hughto, without abandoning abstract painting, began working from the figure. It forced him to rethink drawing and especially color, since hue and tone now had to define

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specific forms in space. The vigorous figure paintings in his exhibit suggested that Hughto is discovering new challenges and possibly an entirely new direction. A large canvas of three reclining figures, bursting with energy, clearly aspired to the grand manner, while a cropped larger-than-life male torso invited comparison, because of its brutality and scale, with Rodin's nude studies for the monument to Balzac. Hughto's bravura command of material serves him less well in his nudes than in his abstractions. Thick passages of paint that would read as telling accents in abstract structures can appear too plasticky or too arbitrary when attached to a shoulder or a breast. It's not a major problem, but one Hughto should be aware of, even though the force of his drawing and his new command of tonal modulation usually carry the pictures. Just how Hughto's concentration on the nude affects his abstract pictures is not yet wholly evident, but whatever the outcome, it would be good to see more of his bold figures.

The overwhelming event in painting last season, to judge by the ads and the amount of press, both laudatory and acrimonious, was the arrival at the Museum of Modern Art of the travelling retrospective of Anselm Kiefer, a vast assortment of large paintings, prints, photographs, works on paper, books and some singularly repellent sculpture that spilled, of necessity, out of MOMA's basement galleries into higher-ceilinged spaces upstairs. Discussion of Kiefer's work, whether enthusiastic or exasperated, has centered on the *idea* of his art, on his claims to affinity with German philosophers, on the sincerity or cynicism of his use of Holocaust allusions, on the success or failure of his efforts to encapsulate the German psyche. His art is usually addressed with intense seriousness verging on awe, perhaps in response to its relentless Northern humorlessness. The Museum of Modern Art's press release is typical. Kiefer's themes, we are told, include "the realm of German myth and legend," "his response to recent German history" and "issues of universal concern"; his imagery is drawn from "literary, cultural religious and historical sources." This, no doubt, distinguishes Kiefer from all other artists, who presumably work in a vacuum.

The show was, in many ways, impressive and absorbing. Kiefer is an ambitious, all-stops-out painter capable of making extraordinary objects with fierce, beautiful corruscated surfaces. The paintings often look as though they have been attacked rather than made; their brutalized surfaces, more than the Wagnerian rhetoric that surrounds the work, carry Kiefer's meaning, and it is

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surprising, in fact, how little that meaning is clarified when he adds specific drawn images or found objects. In a few landscapes, image and surface fuse to reinforce one another in potent, visceral ways—I kept thinking, among other things, of a winter train journey I had made across a cold, bleak East Germany to Berlin--but all too often, surface and image seem at odds. In other pictures, the banality of Kiefer's drawing undermines the inventiveness and evocativeness of his surfaces in ways that seem far from deliberate. The smaller-scale altered photos and prints and the "ruined" books (on hyper-elegant steel stands) were often more eloquent than the large, bombastic paintings. What puzzled me most was the coexistence of Kiefer's impenetrability and literal-mindedness. His symbols are often so arcane that only elaborate labels and explanations reveal the profundities he is supposed to have pondered, or else they are obvious and trite—witness his sculptural glorification of a cliché palette or his far from subtle use of the bird wing.

Art politics seemed to be on exhibit at MOMA as much as art. Kiefer's show raised questions, apart from the now usual issues of which collectors and which dealers were best represented, that had nothing to do with the quality of his paintings or the potency of his content. The sheer size of the pictures, the extravagance of his materials, the weight—physical rather than intellectual—of his works made you wonder at the complications and expense of producing them, to say nothing of the even more daunting problem of moving them across continents and installing them. The aura of power and money that Kiefer's art carries with it accounts for at least some of the respect with which it was greeted.

Kiefer, like many German artists of his generation, acknowledges his debt to Josef Beuys, so the concurrent Beuys exhibition at Hirschl and Adler Modern was both apt and helpful. The selection was fairly expedient and, I should confess, I am not an unqualified admirer of Beuys—I usually like the drawings best—but the chance to compare the two artists was welcome and informative. The diagrams and artifacts of Beuys's shamanistic "actions," the assortment of objects that he chose to elevate to totemic status all seemed highly charged and mysterious in a way that too few of Kiefer's works did. Even more noticeable was the sense of authenticity, of private obsession and of *modesty* in Beuys's work that made Kiefer's appear more grandiloquent and stylish than ever.

Jasper Johns has been almost as visible as Kiefer, of late, partly because of his auction prices, partly because of the travelling exhibit

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of work since 1974 organized for the Venice Biennale, and partly because of a show of his well known *Maps* at the Larry Gagosian Gallery in February and March. I haven't been paying as much attention to Johns in recent years as I once did, although I have been greatly interested in how different his early work now looks than it did when it was first shown. The iconic neutrality of *Flags, Targets*, and *Numbers* was startling in the context of the gestural, emotionally loaded painting of the period. It made the lushness of his surfaces, the sensuousness of his touch less visible than it now is. These days, because of his touch, Johns's work looks closer to Abstract Expressionism, with its drips and layers, than it does to the slick Pop painting with which it was originally linked. His deadpan imagery seems ironic, a serious but mocking commentary on the self-searching and mythologizing of so much American art of the fifties. It's this irony and detachment that makes Johns seem current, yet at the same time, he appears to have said everything he had to say in his first, remarkable pictures; later works, such as the *Maps*, frequently seem to be not very successful attempts to find alternative images for ideas already thoroughly explored. The most recent work is, perhaps for this reason, newly explicit in its references—and, oddly, no less neutral—but these "autobiographical" Johnses lack the power of the best early work. And it becomes increasingly clear that Johns's strength lies not in color but in black and white and in his mastery of greys. That's why the prints, with their obsessive repetitions and layerings, are usually better than paintings of the same image.

Painting may have dominated the past season, but one of the high points was Willard Boepple's exhibition of steel and wood sculpture at Greenberg-Wilson. For several years, Boepple (like Bannard the winner of a Greenburger Award) has rung changes on a structure very like a stepladder. Sometimes the ladders are quite literal, as in the two largest works in the show; Boepple jams their symmetrical frames with a giant cascade of lumber, chunks and blocks of wood, all but obscuring the frame in the process. In a smaller wood sculpture, one of the best in the show, the generating ladder is eroded, deconstructed, so that flying planes dominate and the ladder survives almost as a memory. When he works in steel, Boepple pares down his structures, to make attenuated, minimal pieces where "steps" exist as irregularly placed blocks or stubs and the frame itself treads delicately away from symmetry. The steel pieces, perhaps because greater structural liberties have been taken, are more ambiguous than those in wood, suggesting industrial

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pylons and, at the same time, looking like diagrams of striding Egyptian figures. A massive, chunky piece in wood, *Mull*, translated these notions back into the ladder format and into robust volumes.

The danger is, of course, that the ladder motif will dominate, so that we simply recognize rather than *see* the sculpture. Boepple is alert to the risk and, I suspect, even welcomes it; the gap between the known and the unpredictable is where he chooses to work. The difference between what we know and what Boepple actually builds can be provocative. In his best pieces, he makes us check our recollections against his eccentric constructions and in doing so, makes us question both our perceptions and our preconceptions. And he does it without a text.

Coming in

Partisan Review

- Raymond Aron: *A Memoir*
- Julia Kristeva on the French Revolution
- Tsvetan Todorov on the Enlightenment
- Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut on 1968
- Jed Perl on Salvador Dali
- Stanislaw Baranczak on Joseph Brodsky
- William Phillips: *The Function of Criticism Today*
- David Bar-Illan: Israeli Letter
- Nathan Glazer on Life in the Bronx
- Sonya Rudikoff on Virginia Woolf
- Edith Kurzweil on Peter Gay's *Freud*
- Paul Hollander on Fellow Travellers

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GOING TO THE MOVIES

Edith Kurzweil

THE MOVIE GOER

When Jane and Jerry and Jody and John decide to go to the movies they expect to be entertained. Two hours later, some film critics assume that they walk out with an education, or at least with an improved or a freshly whipped up social consciousness.

The coverage in editorials and reviews of the opening shot in *Working Girl* alone, for instance, with the Statue of Liberty and the rest of New York Harbor as backdrop for Tess McGill's daily commute from Staten Island to Wall Street, has evoked some of the following comments: it boosts American patriotism; it embodies false ideologies of progress and opportunity which are underlined when Tess tells her girlfriend that she has to miss a party and the good times with her live-in boyfriend, because she must go to night school. Even the "magnificent photography" along with the "gorgeous lyric" of this scene and the "excellent direction" by Mike Nichols, it has been pointed out, are no more than successful disguises for the formulaic nature of this modern Cinderella plot.

Maybe because I didn't go to see this movie in order to review it, or because I went when I had two hours between appointments, I was seduced by the panache of this opening. And I must confess, I didn't bring all my sociological guns to it: I relaxed. Among other things, I was wondering whether this ferry which I last rode towards the end of World War II—when we used to have dates by going back and forth on the same nickel, or by going on picnics and hikes in the fields of rural Staten Island—really has become as spiffy as the one in the film. And I took in, and was taken in by, the photography of downtown New York, a scene I still respond to with the same elation I felt when I arrived as a refugee. Having left behind my critical self, I was rooting for Tess by the time she got off the ferry and into her office, and I settled in to be diverted by this whacky comedy. Doesn't every movie goer have such personal reactions, at least until he or she feels compelled to analyze them "scientifically," be it in terms of audience response or from a political or moral perspective?

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It never occurred to me until I read Mona Harrington's op-ed piece in *The New York Times* (January 15, 1989) that I had witnessed "an attack on a woman holding power of her own," or that Tess's boss, the mean, wily and upper-class Katherine, was riding for a fall in both love and career because "she appropriates the sexual initiative." True, Tess who "offends none of the more serious rules for women" ends up with the prince and the corner office, and her business acumen does owe much to what conventionally is called woman's intuition. But is it really useful, as Susanne Ramey Legaultso stated (*The New York Times*, February 7, 1989), "to discern in this lighthearted romp a patriarchal, woman-hating subtext compounded by twin bogies of Democratic cowardice and Republican duplicity"— the former allegedly "fearful of pressing the claims of the disinherited" and the latter "capitalizing on this fear"? In other words, must we keep invoking the assumptions of social realism— which never panned out for art—whenever we go to the movies? Isn't it possible to suspend our sober side when watching a film, and to champion the equality of women without jumping to conclusions about Reagan Country or the latest political flip-flop? Can't we presume that Nichols would parody the most salient and exaggerated contrasts of upper- and working-class lives, would juxtapose them, and would capitalize on their clichés, in order to amuse us? It seems to me that he kept one eye on directing this comedy and his other one on the Oscar—even though he is as aware as everyone else of our inequalities and the need to do something about them. Why, then, must so many movie critics envision every stereotyped and overdrawn movie hero and heroine as representative of the class struggle—which socialist societies have pretty much abandoned? And does free association from a farce to all of our social ills do anything more than confuse the issues? In other words, why are dedicated feminists, earnest intellectuals, and ordinary citizens no longer expected to take time out for play? Is it because films have been declared art and thus must be taken seriously, because work is supposed to be "enjoyment" rather than labor, or because ideology and reality have become inextricably intertwined? Although I have no answer, we must question this confusion of realms, which inevitably is puzzling not only to feminists but also provides ammunition for antifeminists and to the average person who doesn't know what to think of liberated women— of professional women who are able to work and play with men without relying either on their seductive powers or their seducibility.

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POETRY FROM POLAND

TRANSLATED BY STANISLAW BARANCZAK AND CLARE CAVANAGH

Wistawa Szymborska

OUR ANCESTORS' SHORT LIVES

Few of them made it to thirty.
Old age was the privilege of rocks and trees.
Childhood ended as fast as wolf cubs grow.
One had to hurry, to get on with life
before the sun went down,
before the first snow.

Thirteen-year-olds bearing children,
four-year-olds stalking birds' nests in the rushes,
leading the hunt at twenty—
they aren't yet, then they are gone.
Infinity's ends fused quickly.
Witches chewed charms
with all the teeth of youth intact.
A son grew to manhood beneath his father's eye.
Beneath the grandfather's blank sockets the grandson was born.

And anyway they didn't count the years.
They counted nets, pots, sheds, and axes.
Time, so generous towards any petty star in the sky,
offered them a nearly empty hand
and quickly took it back, as if the effort were too much.
One step more, two steps more
along the glittering river
which sprung from darkness and vanished into darkness.

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There wasn't a moment to lose,
no deferred questions, no belated revelations,
just those experienced in time.
Wisdom couldn't wait for gray hair.
It had to see clearly before it saw the light
and to hear every voice before it sounded.

Good and evil—
they knew little of them, but knew all:
when evil triumphs, good goes into hiding;
when good is manifest, then evil lies low.

Neither can be conquered
or cast off beyond return.
Hence, if joy, then with a touch of fear,
if despair, then not without some quiet hope.
Life, however long, will always be short.
Too short for anything to be added.

IN BROAD DAYLIGHT

He would
vacation in a mountain boarding house, he would
come down for lunch, from his
table by the window he would
scan the four spruces, branch to branch,
without shaking off the freshly fallen snow.

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Goateed, balding,
gray-haired, in glasses,
with coarsened, weary features,
with a wart on his cheek and a furrowed forehead,
as if clay had covered the angelic marble up—he wouldn't
know himself when it all happened.
The price, after all, for not having died already
goes up not in leaps but step by step, and he would
pay that price, too.
About his ear, just grazed by the bullet
when he ducked at the last minute, he would
say: "I was damn lucky."

While waiting to be served his noodle soup, he would
read a paper with the current date,
giant headlines, tiny print of ads,
or drum his fingers on the white tablecloth, and his hands would
have been used a long time now,
with their chapped skin and swollen veins.

Sometimes someone would
yell from the doorway: "Mr Baczyński,* phone call for you"—
and there'd be nothing strange about that
being him, about him standing up, straightening his sweater,
and slowly moving towards the door.

At this sight no one would
stop talking, no one would
freeze in mid-gesture, mid-breath
because this commonplace event would
be treated—such a pity—
as a commonplace event.

*Krzystof Kamil Baczyński, an enormously gifted poet of the "war generation," was killed as a member of the Home Army in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 at the age of twenty-three.

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A TALE BEGUN

The world is never ready
for the birth of a child.

Our ships are not yet back from Winnland.
We still have to get over the St. Gothard pass.
We've got to outwit the watchmen on the desert of Thor,
fight our way through the sewers to Warsaw's center,
gain access to King Harald the Butterpat
and wait until the downfall of Minister Fouche.
Only in Acapulco
can we begin anew.

We've run out of bandages,
matches, hydraulic presses, arguments, and water.
We haven't got the trucks, we haven't got the Minghs' support.
This skinny horse won't be enough to bribe the sheriff.
No news so far about the Tartars' captives.
We'll need a warmer cave for winter
and someone who can speak Harari.

We don't know who to trust in Nineveh,
what conditions the prince cardinal will decree,
which names Beria's still got inside his files.
They say Charles the Hammer strikes tomorrow at dawn.
In this situation let's appease Cheops,
report ourselves of our own free will,
change faiths,
pretend to be friends with the Doge
and that we've got nothing to do with the Kwabe tribe.

Time to light the fires.
Let's send a cable to grandma in Zabierzów.
Let's untie the knots in the yurta's leather straps.

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May delivery be easy,
may our child grow and be well.
Let him be happy from time to time

and leap over abysses.
Let his heart have strength to endure
and his mind be awake and reach far.

But not so far
that it sees into the future.
Spare him
that one gift,
O heavenly powers.

Artur Międzyrzecki

FATE THE CLERK LAYS DOWN A NEW SET OF BY-LAWS

Fate the clerk lays down a new set of by-laws
It used to be the elements' decree now it's a decree of the authorities
Hard to believe that back then it was personal like a soul
On a first-name basis with those wretched kings in their nooses

It's gotten red-tapey and torpid
It's a bookkeeper for great numbers
It still cuts down a forest or a nation like before
But now it's hit-or-miss and get-out-if-you-can

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THE WAR OF NERVES

The war of nerves is a natural phenomenon
Dogs wage it with cats, bears with wasps
The pine moth with the forester, the rascal with the bookseller
The skunk and the boa with the rabbit.

Gentle persuasion won't help much here
There's no use dreaming of taking some time off
Since what kind of break will the mountain eagle get
While he's being shot at from a copter

But the nightingale still sings in spite of danger
The soaring eagle holds sway in the spring sky
The swallow flits by, the swift flutters its wings
The woodpecker, gaudy drummer, won't give up its morning scores

The less-nervous one wins in the war of nerves
The one who shuns unnecessary disputes and knows well
That the skunk won't shake off its skunky nature
And that you've got to keep your mental balance

Julia Hartwig

ABOVE US

Boys kicking a ball on a vast square beneath an obelisk
and the apocalyptic sky at sunset to the rear
Why the sudden menace in this view
as if someone wished to turn it all to red dust
The sun already knows And the sky knows it too
And the water in the river knows
Music bursts from the loudspeakers like wild laughter
Only a star high above us
stands lost in thought with a finger to its lips

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WHAT CAN THEY

What can the interrogator and the interrogated tell each other?
What is the common language in which they could talk?
That language is mountains away and there is no fool
who would set out in search of it
The knife enters the animal's flesh without consent or prior inquiries
the apple won't strike up a chat with the rifle bullet cast off in the grass
the liar's tongue turns round like a rotten mill-wheel
and the water won't sing in chorus with its creak
Longing for freedom is like a lark flying straight up
towards the face of God and the sun
with unshakable faith that the face will finally be seen
The little lark flies faster than the stone thrown by a foolish bully
Oh the dialogue of the shoe and the crushed weed
the dialogue of the pale warden and the young face paler still
the dialogue of force and martyrdom
cruelty and pain
the martyr and the torturer
before it's cut short
by whom by what when

Wiktor Woroszylski

FASCIST NATIONS

Shortly after the war of 1914–1918 the first fascist nations
emerged in Europe In those nations
the sun rose and set at the usual time shedding light
on homestead roofs and hills' green slopes Cattle
mooed gently in cowsheds Mothers kissed
their children's foreheads to wake them at dawn Fathers returning from

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work
with cheerful weariness in their bones smelled
the smoke from their hearths and after dinner
fell asleep in armchairs or tinkered intrepidly or
practiced their music with a passion Children
played at stickball at hopscotch and hide-and-seek Little girls
sprouted breasts and overnight
little girls turned into big girls filled with whisper
and murmur like trees in the woods and sudden giggles the sound
of which
made boys' throats go dry On summer evenings
curtains lit from within showed shadows meeting
parting and meeting again tenderly Whereas in winter
lovers inhaled the steam of one another's breath in snowy gardens
And
one might also mention cats arching their backs sparrows
soaring up above the pavement old women on their porches
flowers
cut and potted nurses
taking patients' temperatures people sweeping streets
with brooms One might mention drying
wood wind in a thicket damp furrows in a field And one might
also
call to mind many particulars bearing witness that

For there were no signs on the sky mournful comets
burning bushes water turned to blood For
life went on as always Hence there truly were in those nations
many ordinary people and good people and people
who knew nothing and to whom
it never occurred and who
didn't consider themselves accessories and who
had nothing to do with it and who didn't
even read the papers or read them carelessly caught up
in thoughts of what they had to get done
fix the leaking roof get the shoes
repaired propose have
a beer mix the paint light a candle and who

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really didn't see the fear in a neighbor's eyes didn't
hear the trembling in travellers' voices asking the way didn't
see the difference didn't hear
an inner voice or if
they had their doubts there was nothing they could do and they took
comfort
saying At least we
aren't doing anything wrong we live as we always did Which was true

And yet these were
fascist nations

INDICTMENT

How ugly this man is
with his disfigured face With his eyelid
half-covering his eye
like a curtain that got stuck
With a gag of blood on his lips

His ugliness
is subversive Even on an even surface
his legs give way beneath him

The broken line of his arms
lifts a hand
against the arrow-straightness of your barrels, your salutes

Nothing speaks in his favor
He's backed
only by the wall

He doesn't even speak up for himself
He's mute He won't

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Your Honor, Humanity sir:
His sweaty shirt
is an enemy flag
His foul breath
poisons the atmosphere
His sadness assaults
the tranquility of his fellow men

It's obvious that
for this obstinate sticking to ugliness
the man deserves to be forgotten
by those who live in beauty

THE PADLOCK SPEAKS

(From the "Diary of Internment, II")

Wake up I'm your morning bird
my tender rasping rubs your eyes
my rusty rays illuminate your prayers

You've been a good boy Now you may take a step
but be careful I can jam at any moment
Don't make my gravity any harder than it is
I'm only iron after all and can barely hold my own

Today I'll have to hear out your confession
dictate your letter home
count your movements and your glances
make sure that none of them have been concealed

Learn how to read me my dear scholar
this will help you make it through another day

And don't let your dream try to escape

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Ryszard Krynicki

SOCIALIST REALISM

The ghost of the dove of peace
with a little white flag in its beak
flies back and forth
along the Berlin Wall.
A sniper
keeps it in his sights.

YOU'RE FREE

"You're free," says the guard,
and the iron gate shuts

this time from this side.

A STOP

During an endless stop
in East Berlin
a young customs officer zealously unscrews
the tin ceiling
in the car's corridor; standing on tiptoe,
he checks for runaways; the top of his uniform
pulls up and reveals a plump
helpless tummy, cuddling

a holster.

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FACING THE WALL

A woman turns the mirror around
to face the wall: now the wall
reflects the dead snow
crunching under iron soles.
The fire freezes.
Nothingness puts on its bayonets.

Jan Polkowski

"MY SWEET MOTHERLAND"

I was born in a train,
on a moving frontier,
as a Jewish runt in the corner of a freight car,
as a Polish-speaking Wehrmacht soldier
marching on Moscow,
as an NKVD-man of unknown descent
shooting at my ancestors: Poles,
Lithuanians, Tatars—nobles with a two-headed typhus
on their crests.
I was born on their moving graves:
in Kazakhstan, in Lithuania,
in Częstochowa, Cracow, Katyń, London.

This is my citizenship—your belly
raised
beneath your breasts (Annie, little mother).

(My Invisible Motherland,
we'll be true to each other.)
It no longer matters.

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HYMN

The prison window looks out on a compound.
Snow and clay surrounded
by a concrete wall and barbed wire.
What do you need (O gray eagle)
this tight crown for?

Bronisław Maj

***

Who will bear witness to these times?
Who will record them? Certainly none of us:
we've lived here too long, we've soaked the epoch
up too well, we're too loyal to it to tell the truth
about it. To tell the truth—at all. Loyal:
I say *justice*, but think of revenge's dark joy,
I say *concern* while thinking *them* and *us*,
and *what have they done to me*. I've got
nothing else in my defense: loyalty. And weakness:
that I hated wicked people, cheated to shield
the truth, that scorn was my sick pride.
Hatred, scorn, lies—for so many years,
so as to survive and stay pure. But it can't be done:
survive and stay pure. At best—survive.
Stay—mute. Ask: Who will bear witness?
Knowing full well that none of us and certainly no one
else will. Hence without a word. An empty epoch.
More full of life than any other because
ours, and we won't see another. Uproar,
clamor, wail, laugh, howl, the same old
song, no words, not a single word
to speak some day
for us.

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***

This city died. Blue streetcars moan
on the curves, the streets can't curb
a nervous gray crowd, colored light streams from the signs.
  Voices,
dust, exhaust. This city died when you understood
how easily it could die. Those who think that it happens in flashes
  and
claps of thunder,
as in the Scriptures, are wrong. So is the Master
who sneers that it will come on cat's paws. They are wrong
about the method. Not ready: in mid-word, with an
unsent letter, with a woman still wanting love, a hidden
sin which will stay mortal—no one is
ready. Love what is doomed. There is no other
love. Part each time as if forever,
that is, be kind, forgive. Don't put off for tomorrow,
don't keep back the great, important words, there may not be
time, or space. Henceforth there will be
no other love. This city is
everywhere.

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BOOKS

GOING TO COLLEGE

COLLEGE: THE UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE IN AMERICA. REPORT OF THE CARNEGIE FOUNDATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF TEACHING. By Ernest L. Boyer. Harper and Row. $19.95.

One of the most persistent—and most misconceived— of modern complaints is one that bemoans the loss of a "clear vision" from higher education and calls for a unified curriculum based on commonly shared values. The complaint is misconceived, though not necessarily inaccurate, because what is seen as a loss of shared values, or a collapse of standards, or a descent into educational "relativism" should just as easily be applauded as the outcome of a democratic revolution. Even many on the left view the trend in academic literatery criticism toward theory, feminism, Marxism, and other forms of radicalism as if it were an invasion by barbarians rather than simply a reflection of the fact that social groups other than the usual ones have begun to have a say in how literary culture will be defined.

This is not to say that it is undemocratic to complain that the college curriculum has become incoherent, and it is self-deceiving to rationalize curricular incoherence as if it were democratic progress. Those who are currently proposing a return to shared educational values are reacting to a real problem, and one for which traditional progressive solutions have proved inadequate. The common mistake in this reaction, however—and it is the mistake which has haunted the whole tradition of General Education in America—is the assumption that the only practical cure for incoherence is to secure a consensus on educational content. It is this assumption that results in prescriptions which would be worse than the disease if they were to work, though fortunately for everybody they never do.

The current demand that the curriculum be integrated around some unitary conception of a common educational content is only the latest in a long series of such efforts, which have always ended in futility. This futility is often recognized, and in fact presupposed, in jeremiads against educational decline, which often have the air of

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Sunday sermons preached with no expectation that anything can be done about the conditions deplored. Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* is the most notable current example of this sort of ritualized complaint. But in several cases, specific practical alternatives have been proposed and have provoked wide discussion. I am thinking particularly of former Secretary of Education William Bennett's 1984 pamphlet, "To Reclaim a Legacy," a report commissioned by the National Endowment for the Humanities (of which Bennett was then chairman), and E. D. Hirsch's 1987 book, *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know.* Bennett proposes to institute a common content at the college level by means of a Great Books curriculum. Hirsch would produce a similar result in the elementary grades by condensing into lists the information that "literate Americans know."

Americans are rightly alarmed at the state of the curriculum, and the Bennett and Hirsch proposals offer the sort of apparently commonsense solutions they want to hear. In the long run, however, such proposals are likely to have more value in drawing public attention to educational issues and stirring up debate than in providing workable strategies. Bennett's version of the Great Books idea hardly differs from the one which fizzled when proposed by Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mortimer Adler at the University of Chicago in the 1930s. There is little reason to think it will be any more effective this time around.

Hirsch is concerned chiefly with the elementary levels of schooling, but his ideas have been influential in the college debate as well. Hirsch would shift the emphasis from great books and formal skills to the information content students tend to lack. However, he too fails to see that education is a social practice, and that reducing it to an abstract set of contents leads to the same arid result as reducing it to isolated skills or texts. Hirsch's intentions are good, and his assumption is probably correct that those who pass for literate take for granted a shared body of information. The problem is that learning to use such information is too context-dependent a process to be successfully gained from lists and encyclopedia entries, especially by students who are often disaffected from intellectual culture. It is therefore doubtful that cultural literacy can be packaged, for studying it in this form would be so boring as to induce a lifelong hatred of learning.

Bennett and Hirsch have too much faith in lists, whether of books or of facts, and not enough interest in the contexts which give

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meaning to books and facts for those who take an interest in them. The problem both ignore is that unless students have some context for making sense of great books or cultural information, they are not likely to become interested in either. But then, humanistic education today contains a multitude of competing contexts, from the traditional to the radical, and there is no agreement about which of these contexts should have primacy. As long as this state of disagreement persists—and there is no end in sight—any approach which assumes the necessity for a consensus on educational content is a prescription for continued futility.

Why the consensus-approach is doomed to failure is nowhere more poignantly illustrated than by another of the recent books that calls for a return to educational common ground, Ernest L. Boyer's Carnegie Foundation report, *College*. No neoconservative dogmatist, Boyer is reasonable, balanced, and tolerant, and he respects the complexities of the educational problem, up to a point. *College* seems to me a symptomatic book, one whose way of thinking would take us once more down the garden path which the traditional philosophy of General Education has so often led in the past.

Boyer succinctly formulates the main premises of *College*: "An effective college has a clear and vital mission. Administrators, faculty, and students share a vision of what the institution is seeking to accomplish." It should always keep in the forefront such fundamental questions as, "What is most worth knowing? What is it that colleges believe students need to know and understand as well as be able to do?" He goes on to say, "The undergraduate college must be something more than 'a skillfully coordinated department store'. . . . "

Yet Boyer and the Carnegie Foundation researchers who amassed the materials for his book "found at most colleges in our study a great difficulty, sometimes to the point of paralysis. . . . Common goals are blurred." They found that "colleges are confused about their mission and how to impart shared values on which the vitality of both higher education and society depends." They found "a disturbing gap between the college and the larger world." "The nation's colleges have been successful in responding to diversity," Boyer says, "and in meeting the needs of individual students. They have been much less attentive to the larger, more transcendent issues that give meaning to existence and help students put their own lives in perspective."

Boyer recognizes "that these problems are not new, but they

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have, in one way or another, troubled higher education for generations." He concedes that the belief that colleges could ever come together on "the larger, more transcendent issues" may, "at first blush, seem quixotic." For "not only has cultural coherence faded, but the very notion of commonalities seems strikingly inapplicable to the vigorous diversity of contemporary life. Within the academy itself, the fragmentation of knowledge, narrow departmentalism, and an intense vocationalism are, as we have acknowledged, the strongest characteristics of collegiate education."

Yet instead of seeing that these very conditions require a new approach, Boyer's argument follows the time-honored logic of General Education philosophy: is the college curriculum in a state of disorder? Have the humanities in particular lost touch with any conception of what their central values are? Then the obvious solution must be to work back to first principles, to ask what it is that humanists think is most "general," and therefore most worth knowing, in their disciplines rather than what is merely accidental or ancillary. The logic seems reasonable, but why does something always seem to go wrong along the way?

A good place to look for answers to this question is with the anecdotes that run through *College*, several of which are open to different interpretations from those Boyer gives them. Take the case of a prestigious Eastern college "with about two thousand students and more than a century of tradition behind it." There the college registrar told Boyer's staff:

> We've had a half-a-dozen committees at different points in the past looking at what our goals are, were, and should be. Then, sometimes, they get as far as making a statement, which doesn't provide for any action, and of course is lost or forgotten by the time someone else decides in a year or two that we really need a committee to set goals.

Boyer never pauses to reflect on these brief glimpses of concrete reality which appear from time to time in his book. Here, for example, while he faults the failure to come up with a statement of past and present goals for the college, he does not say what kind of statement the committee *might* have drafted. Anyone who has served on such committees will know the feeling of hopelessness at trying to formulate a nontrivial statement of goals that a college faculty will likely accept. It is no wonder that when such statements do get formulated

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they are usually soon forgotten. Is it that such committees are inherently lacking in vision or nerve? Or might there be something wrong with the very notion that effective education requires prior agreement on what is worth teaching and knowing?

A similar question is raised by a second anecdote reported by Boyer, this one concerning a "large public university." The Carnegie staff:

> . . . asked an associate dean about institutional goals. She pointed to the front flyleaf of the university catalog and read a statement that emphasized vaguely-worded references to "usable skills," "the expansion of knowledge," and "improvement of the quality of life."

Boyer criticizes the vagueness of this university's catalogue, but again he fails to suggest how it could have been made less vague. (It is symptomatic that the disparaged phrase "quality of life" reappears without irony a few pages later in one of Boyer's own formulations.) As in the first anecdote, the sympathies of anyone who has been in the situation described are likely to go out to the administrator rather than to Boyer. If you have ever been assigned to write college catalogue copy, you will know how impossible it is to make such material interesting: anything mildly controversial has to be suppressed, because it would offend constituencies. But the problem arises only if it is assumed that college constituencies have to agree on a "clear and vital mission." It is only because catalogues are expected to express a shared, uncontroversial (and therefore dull) mission that they are condemned to be platitudinous.

These anecdotes typify Boyer's habit of stopping his analysis short just at the point where it threatens to touch academic reality. Boyer senses that the causes of curricular fragmentation are rooted in structural conditions, but then he falls back on blaming the usual suspects: administrators who put enrollments over intellectual seriousness, turning the curriculum into a cafeteria counter; faculty who put research over teaching, favoring specialized courses over broadly humanistic ones; vocationalism given preference over tradition. On the one hand, "Colleges, searching for students, are adding programs they think will sell"; on the other hand, "The curriculum is controlled by academic departments." But to blame the thwarting of educational commonality on these economic and professional "special interests" is to blame constraints which could hardly be removed

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without revolutionary changes in the economy as well as the tenor of professional life.

Seeing no practical way of altering these structural constraints, Boyer is reduced to repeating the pious wish that special interests would stop interfering with the need for clear vision, common educational mission, and agreement on what is most worth knowing. His book is filled with empty exhortations that, despite the formidable forces acknowledged to be going in the other direction, common ideals "should" not or "must" not be thwarted: "If the college experience is to be worthwhile, there must be intellectual and social values that it holds in common even as there must be room for private preferences." All this is just wishful thinking unless one can suggest how "common intellectual and social values" can be institutionalized in a culture at odds over values.

A more realistic response would be to recognize that they can't be and, in a democracy, should not be. We should recognize that there is no salvaging an educational ideal based on some single view of what is most worth knowing and should start looking for ways to overcome curricular incoherence without such an ideal. Instead of idly wishing that the prevailing conflicts of material interests, goals, philosophies, and specialization would somehow be resolved, a more useful tactic would be to ask how these conflicts themselves might be exploited more productively in the curriculum. Rather than seeing the dissonance of ideologies and research specialties as symptoms of special interests somehow to be counteracted by doses of "general" values that are always too little and too late, we would be wiser to view that dissonance as a potential source of vitality that could be used to create the coherence everyone is demanding.

In other words, the alternative to the trivial pluralism of the department store curriculum lies not in overcoming special interests in favor of some forced consensus, but in making more productive use of existing disagreements and specializations. Boyer cannot conceive such an alternative because for him there are only two options—incoherence or consensus. He assumes that the only way disciplinary fragmentation could be overcome is by reshaping curriculum around universal human truths. In the following passages I italicize the phrases in which curricular coherence is confused with universal consensus:

> Can the American college, with its *fragmentation and competing special interests*, define *shared academic goals*? Is it possible to offer

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> students, with their separate roots, a program of general education that *helps them see connections* and broadens their perspective?
>
> * * * *
>
> So distinctive are the different disciplines in method or content, the argument goes, that *there is no way to connect them*. Knowledge is so vast and specialization so persistent that *shared goals* cannot be defined.
>
> * * * *
>
> The central question is not whether the curriculum selected is old or new, disciplinary or thematic—but whether students are helped to see *integration across the disciplines* and discover *the shared relationship common to all people*.

In these passages, Boyer confuses the potentially quite practicable objective of forging curricular connections with the impracticable and unnecessary one of reaching a consensus on values. He confuses connecting different components with agreeing on a single rationale for them. Thus he confuses "integration across the disciplines" with discovering a "shared relationship common to all people," objectives which are not the same. Connecting different disciplines might in some cases lead to a discovery of shared relationships "common to all people," but it might in others reveal irreconcilable antagonisms. There is no knowing in advance whether the outcome of connecting the disciplines would be more consensus or less but then for purposes of making the curriculum more coherent for students there would be no need to know. Dramatizing differences can be as effective a way of clarifying academic intellectual culture as discovering universal identities.

The ultimate expression of the premise that educational coherence requires a curriculum based on universals is the proposal of an "integrated core" of general education courses Boyer proposes as the solution to the curricular crisis. These would explore "common themes that cut across the disciplines," themes concerned "with the universal experiences that are common to all people, with those shared activities without which human relationships are diminished and the quality of life reduced." (Here is where "quality of life," earlier dismissed by Boyer as an evasive cliché, comes bach as a positive.

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Boyer divides his universal themes into seven "areas of inquiry": Language, Art, Heritage, Institutions, Nature, Work, Identity. His comments on "Art" are representative:

> *Art: The Aesthetic Dimension*. There are human experiences that defy the power of words to describe them. To express our most intimate, most profoundly moving feelings and ideas we use a more sensitive, more subtle language we call the arts. . . . Students need to understand the unique ability of the arts to affirm and dignify our lives and remain the means by which the quality of a civilization can be measured.

Here, for the arts, are the universals "common to all people" that we arrive at by factoring out accidentals.

One needs no background in aesthetics to recognize that every one of Boyer's statements about art have been contested or debunked by numerous schools of modern criticism, to say nothing of the modern arts themselves. The uplifting view of art implied in the reference to "the unique ability of the arts to affirm and dignify our lives" has been under relentless attack for over a century both in art and criticism. In any respectable college faculty, it would be pointed out that, far from being universal, this characterization of art is specific to the modern period, when the arts became identified with a threatened realm of creativity and value for which commercial civilization seemed to have no use. It would also be pointed out that in the postmodern era, this compensatory idea of art as an autonomous repository of value is thought by many to have become passé.

My point, however, is not that Boyer is working with an obsolete or mistaken view of art. We could revise Boyer's description to bring it into line with postmodern aesthetic theory and its difficulties would remain. Such a corrected description might accord with recent avant-garde thinking on art, but it would seem arbitrary or perverse to many traditional humanists. The point is that as long as we assume that a consensus on the nature and function of art is a prerequisite of an undergraduate introduction to subject, only a bad outcome is likely: either some one attitude toward art will arbitrarily exclude competing ones, or agreement will be gained by so diluting the conception of art that it will be meaningless. Boyer's mistake lies not in his view of art, but in his assumption that organizing the teaching of art depends on getting agreement on what the essential nature of art is.

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Suppose we were to take a different approach, though one that does not neglect Boyer's concerns. Imagine an introductory art course which includes the universalist view of art expounded by Boyer, but as one voice among others within a larger debate. Imagine a course which dramatized the debate between Boyer's universalist view of art and various recent challenges to that view that see art as radically historical and political. Imagine that in addition to dramatizing this debate, this course traces some of its history (which would itself be presented as controversial), while relating that history to concurrent developments outside the arts. Imagine that this debate and its history were all along used to give students contexts for understanding particular works of art.

The practical advantage of thinking of such a course in these non-consensual terms is that you can imagine implementing it without having to get prior faculty agreement about the nature of art or the extent to which it expresses or does not express universal human experiences. All that would need to be agreed on would be the desirability of framing disagreements so that students could see what is at stake in them. Under such a conception, it would no longer be necessary to feel that "special interests" such as professional specializations and partisan ideologies would no longer be in competition with the aim of providing students a general picture of the state of thinking about the arts. These special interests would be part of the picture, but they would be presented in relation to one another and to the cultural situation they comprise.

In fact, courses and sequences along the lines I am suggesting already exist today in interdisciplinary programs organized around categories such as "theory" and "cultural studies." In such programs, recent controversies over the canon and the nature and status of artistic value become part of the context for studying works of art. The acknowledged masterpieces usually continue to be taught (the notion that the traditional canon has simply been scrapped has been absurdly exaggerated), but in a way that no longer hides from students the fact that experts disagree about them—about which works deserve to be considered masterpieces, the reasons underlying that judgment, and the social processes by which masterpieces come to be recognized as such within a culture. Because this kind of course is as much about competing ways of thinking about art as about works of art themselves, it is open to the charge that it distracts students from the primary experience of art works. But a course that presents art as culturally contested ground figures to be more, not

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less, effective in enhancing students' primary experience of art works than one that presents art as a set of "universal experiences that are common to all people."

The most telling weakness of the approach of Boyer and all the others today who would consolidate the humanities around a common ground of values is that this approach makes the humanities even more boring than many students already think they are. There is nothing wrong with common ground if your community happens already to have it. But once the common ground has become attenuated, any inventory of shared truths is naturally going to be bland and vapid. That is why universalist defenses of the humanities always have the opposite effect from the one they aim at: by explicitly spelling out the common values, these defenses reveal how thin and platitudinous these values are and why teaching the humanities as a repository of them is a prescription for further alienating students.

I believe the weakness of Boyer's book, and of all the others that preach a return to educational and cultural universals, is a symptom of the death throes of the modern ideal of General Education, which is losing its standing among academic professionals. The present conflict over humanistic education reflects the gulf between a lay citizenry that still thinks of the humanities (insofar as it thinks about them) as a repository of timeless universals and an academic professional culture which increasingly views such purported universals as contingent historical and cultural constructions. The academic culture is likely to win this conflict, partly because in the long run professionalism always tends to overcome lay resistance, but also because, in this case, the professionals are promoting a more democratic social vision than that of the traditional universalist alternative. It is becoming increasingly difficult to square democratic ideals with the notion that some one form of culture, or way of studying culture, deserves uncontested privilege over others.

This is what is poorly understood by those who attack the "relativism" and "nihilism" underlying the current historicizing and politicizing trend in the humanities. Relativistic and nihilistic thinking do indeed figure in this trend, but what is denounced under these epithets is frequently nothing more than the recognition that art, culture, and humanistic values are social products, that they have a history, that they are subject to conflicting interpretations, that they change under the pressure of the social conflicts which make and unmake them.

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This historical view of culture has produced a powerful academic movement that is attempting to bring the curriculum into line with its sense of the historically constructed, rather than eternal or absolute, nature of culture. What educational changes this new movement will produce remain to be seen, but they are likely to be an improvement over the pieties of General Education, which no longer express the way most of us live, if they ever did.

GERALD GRAFF

A GREENBERG RETROSPECTIVE

CLEMENT GREENBERG: THE COLLECTED ESSAYS AND CRITICISM. VOLUMES 1 AND 2. Edited by John O'Brian. University of Chicago Press. $55.00.

By all rights a retrospective exhibition of an artist's career is selectively comprehensive. Chronicling the artist's oeuvre from start to finish, it argues against years of received opinion handed down by critics speaking on the artist's behalf. Fifty years after his first articles in *Partisan Review* catapulted him to instant notoriety, Clement Greenberg himself gets to see a full-scale retrospective of his complete critical writings, and with it the opportunity to have matters restored to fullness and perspective.

But not quite. Published so far are two of the four volumes projected in the series, these covering the years 1939-1949, the first formative decade of Greenberg's criticism. Nor are the other two volumes soon forthcoming; given the previous commitments of his editor John O'Brian, the remainder of Greenberg's retrospective will have to wait at least until the early 1990s. In plain view, however, is Greenberg's sense of modernism, honed to a radical instrument of culture. The formalism Greenberg has contrived continues to remain one of the most penetrating interpretions of modernism by which we understand the inner structure and goals of advanced art created in the twentieth century.

Fifty years after the fact, when art historians and critics target Greenberg to prove either how right or how wrong he is, the essays to which they most often appeal are "Avant-garde and Kitsch" (1939) and "Towards a Newer Laocoon" (1940). The main reason for this is

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their perception that Greenberg's intellectual center coincides with his literary origins. "Avant-garde and Kitsch," Greenberg's entry into the discourse of the anti-Stalinist avant-garde intelligentsia, voiced support for the artistic resistance. No compromise, no rapprochement with commercial mass culture was allowed if the modernist artist was to be worthy of the avant-garde. Kitsch, whether promulgated by totalitarian propaganda or democracies' regional notions of art, was seen as both politically and aesthetically noxious. With World War II in the wings and with Trotsky exiled and sending *Partisan Review* cultural bulletins from Mexico, Greenberg's contribution to the discussion initiated by William Phillips, Philip Rahv, and Dwight Macdonald, as editors of this journal, was not idle chatter but decidedly activist. Neither was the notion of the avant-garde an abstraction, given that Greenberg was writing this even as Eliot's "East Coker" and "Dry Salvages," published in 1940 and 1941, appeared in *Partisan*'s pages. The avant-garde was happening in the present.

Announced in "Towards a Newer Laocoon," and argued in essays thereafter, is Greenberg's contention that whatever purists may say, we do not need to resort to their metaphysics to see that abstraction is the best of today's visual art. Greenberg is not being coy when he says that the excellence of abstraction can be apprehended directly. But neither does this suggest he is incapable of employing certain privileged ideas for preemptive metaphysical strikes. An idealist right from the start, he insists on identifying canonical art with the most advanced expressions of culture to distance himself from what he calls "the lesser talents." The short honor list Greenberg compiled over the years is well known. Matisse, Picasso, Mondrian, Miró, and Pollock manage to enter his canon of painting. De Kooning's first abstractions earn highest praise. Early, that is to say Cubist, Giacometti and David Smith form the short list of indispensable sculptors.

"Indispensable" is the operative word. If more and more people wield pigment-laden brushes, this fact does not make them all painters nor all their products paintings—at least in anything but a technical sense. According to Greenberg's interpretation of Woelfflin, pictures may come into being but remain irrelevant for the history of painting unless they originate or bring to fruition a major spatial paradigm. They will prove their worth definitively, as modernist history since Courbet has shown, by intensifying those plastic and flat qualities unique to the visual medium of painting.

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For Greenberg, Cubism remains the most significant style of modern art for having invented a truly new visual structure, one, moreover, offering a pictorial rebuttal to Renaissance illusion. So strong is this belief that Greenberg tends to be prejudicial, sometimes ignoring a valid stylistic lineage competing with the Cubist geneology he derives for his artists. (Pollock, one may argue, is essentially Impressionist in syntax, Expressionist in semantics.) In this retrospective of collected essays, however, one sees Greenberg's radical view of modern art unfold with unexpected and ramified thoughtfulness. Here is no piece of legislation upheld without exception, and typically Greenberg will award partial favorable judgments in consideration of lesser talents and problematic careers. Despite himself, Greenberg's practical criticism is more forgiving than his systematic aesthetics.

In any event, ideology has not been the stumbling block for Greenberg that it has for some art critics. John Berger, for instance, believes art for art's sake to be mere entertainment—its aesthetics, an unconscionable detachment from politics and society. He is thus forced by his ideological stance to elevate Léger above Cézanne as the superior artist. Greenberg does not fall victim to this sociological ploy. Refusing to lead with his ideology, Greenberg rightly maintains that Cézanne is the superior artist for a style implemented more radically and strenuously, his avant-garde painting totally beyond the appeasement of culture even today. In contrast to Cézanne, by courting accessibility and communication with society, Léger compromises his so-called radical position. Then, too, entertainment descends on Léger in another way. In a 1941 review of Léger, Greenberg sadly ruminates on the truth that it is difficult for an abstract artist to keep fresh. "By force of repetition," Léger's work has become "facile and empty. . . . When the abstract artist grows tired, he becomes an interior decorator—which is still, however, to be more creative than an academic painter."

Consciously or not, Greenberg assumes the position of art historian Henri Focillon, who believed in the soundness of structure, with the concomitant decadence of ingratiating substitutes and their "merely decorative" effects. To Greenberg, an artist becomes merely decorative through a failure of visual nerve or by the intention to ingratiate himself with society. Flash forward twenty years later: will Greenberg have the gumption to say these words to color-field artists whose work has grown soft from facile rehearsals of spatial ideas? Will Greenberg turn from this gentrification of art to at least some

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works of Minimalism by Donald Judd and Sol LeWitt, that at once extend David Smith while returning to Constructivism's genuinely radical conception of sculpture? How Greenberg copes with radical art unforeseen by him is beyond the historical frame of this part of the retrospective. What is immediately pertinent is that Greenberg does not confuse the abstract concerns of art for art's sake with entertainment; art is not entertainment for the sighted. As Greenberg was to write years later, "Trotskyism turned into art for art's sake, which cleared the way, heroically, for what was to come."

Adversaries of Greenberg protest that emphasizing formalist implications of modernism is simply not historical, yet even though anyone scanning these volumes of collected essays will note that a contextual approach to art is indeed notably absent, such an objection to his approach by no means invalidates it. In actuality, giving formal priority to art does not so much register Greenberg's particular choice as a widely-held period assumption. In the 1920s when Greenberg went to school, formalism was in vogue throughout Europe, utilized by a contextual art historian such as Erwin Panofsky as much as by critical upstarts like Greenberg, not because it was fashionable but because such sustained formal analysis was tantamount to a demonstrable visual literacy. It is no wonder that armed with his analytic skills, plus native perceptivity, Greenberg spotted the work of Pollock and Smith and confidently championed their art, as unintelligible as it may have been to others at the time. With both social history and biography ancillary to informed sight, this significant art did not get lost in the welter of contemporary artifacts pleabargaining their way into history but was appreciated for the definitive achievement it is. Stringent though it may be, pure visibility has survived Woelfflinian coinage for reasons more valid than proponents of pure contextuality would like to concede.

There is a lesson that Greenberg's radical, formalist interpretation of modern art still can teach history. In a recent interview William Lieberman of the Metropolitan Museum of Art told me that, as his title suggests, he is curator not of "modern art" but of "twentieth century painting and sculpture." Even so, the logic of this does not disguise what amounts to an aesthetic policy statement: now the Metropolitan Museum of Art maintains that modernism be relegated to a small aesthetic inflection in the history of twentieth century practice, and on the walls of the vast halls of the Lila Acheson Wallace Wing, we do indeed see evidence of Lieberman's decision to support an untheoretical chronicle of painting in its many

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current idioms. At the Museum of Modern Art meanwhile, where Kirk Varnedoe is chief curator of painting and sculpture, we can speculate about a shift in policy already discernible in this long-time enclave of modernism. In response to pressures to open up MOMA to art of political protest and to a demographic spectrum of artists, solo shows and group shows alike are reflecting a shift from aesthetic to sociological values. As is usually the case, this sociologically "enlightened" art entails waffling aesthetic quality.

For Greenberg, art history is not to be confused with current events. It is rather a plot interpreting this sort of quotidian story, a plot whose design enacts an advanced notion of visual structure. His radical sense of modernism surely offers such a plot, yet it offers more. The general lesson to be learned from his formalist approach is that though art history may potentially take in all man-made things, the plot—our interpretation of its history—must adhere to a significant theoretical foundation. Greenberg's own position shows, furthermore, that under whatever cultural aegis we determine our interpretation of history, there can be no aesthetic backsliding. As color was to Matisse, the formalist avant-garde is to Greenberg: a way of defining culture by its most advanced expression. If our society is capable of only enfeebled, if well-intentioned, art, he maintains, then that's what all of us—not only critics—should be unafraid to say.

MARJORIE WELISH

THE UNDISMEMBERED SELF

THE SELECTED LETTERS OF MARK VAN DOREN. Edited with an introduction by George Hendrick. Louisiana State University Press. $30.00.

A year before Lionel Trilling's death he told the *Columbia Spectator* that "the teacher and friendship that meant most to me was Mark Van Doren. His relationship to literature meant the most to me." Trilling is not alone in this view, but his reasons for it are worth considering, and some of them are implicit in a well-known passage from one of his essays on Wordsworth:

> This failure to conceive the actuality of the life of common

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> routine is typical of modern literature since, say, Tolstoi . . . [and suggests] a limitation of our conception of the spiritual life. . . . The possibility of tragic art depends primarily upon the worth we ascribe not to dying but to living, and to living in 'the common routine.'

In poetry, prose, and life Van Doren often celebrated, *inter alia*, "the common routine," the quotidian, the simple, the normal, the apparently unpoetical and unliterary, but never in a complacent or middlebrow way. His body of poetry, criticism, and fiction, and his long and enduringly influential teaching career at Columbia University all provide a profound contrast and challenge to many of the chief features and tenets of literary and cultural modernism. This is well illustrated in an essay on Van Doren's poetry by one of his former students, the poet Richard Howard. The essay, "To Be, While Still Becoming: A Note on the Lyric Verse (1924–1972) of Mark Van Doren," introduces the last volume of Van Doren's poems, *Good Morning* (1973), and is a necessary starting point for serious consideration of his poetry, but it also sheds a great deal of light on the "modern temper" in general, of which Van Doren was acutely aware.

According to Howard, Van Doren's kind of poetry, both "antedates" and "underlies" our "modern orthodoxy of *terribilità* and its searing wisdom . . . of transgressed limits, for it is the song of" [as Van Doren wrote]:

> . . . the middle world
> That was made as if by children,
> Nor is changed with growing old . . .

Howard notes "our difficulties" with Van Doren's philosophical and poetic "ease . . . imperturbable grace, the clarity and radiance of an undismembered self," "lack of tragic contention" and "denial of extremity," his preference for "centers to edges, meetings to sunderings," his love and practice of the poetry and prose of *statement*.

In his love and practice of judicious and eloquent statements of the normal, of the habitually excluded middle, Van Doren displayed a critical intelligibility and modesty and a traditional piety very rare in our time. He knew that although religion, philosophy, and literature are not identical or interchangeable, they are not easily or safely

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separable, that their relations are organic, intricate, numerous, and subtle. They share profoundly, in their traditional forms, an insistence on and embodiment of "seeing life steadily . . . and whole." Whereas so much modern life, work, and intellection have grown more mechanical, disaffected, and specialized, classic and enduring literature and traditional religion must concern themselves with the whole, with integrity, proportion, emotion, morale, and synthesis.

Some of these points about Van Doren were made a decade before Howard's essay by Allen Tate, writing about his poetry. He saw Van Doren as a "formalist" who was "day by day the whole man who submits the whole range of his awareness to the forms that he has elected to use" and "a great poet in the minor modes."

But if his poetic modes were mostly minor because short—his narrative poetry, like most narrative poetry, not winning much acceptance in our time—his poetic vocation was lifelong and inextricably bound up with his other callings: teacher, critic, friend, and sage. In fact these aspects are hard to separate, as George Hendrick's finely chosen and edited volume of Van Doren's letters shows.

Not only poets and other writers but also colleagues and students have commented on Van Doren's "undismembered self." Donald Keene, who was later to become an eminent scholar and translator from the Japanese, spoke of Van Doren's "generosity and deep humanity," and remembered his remarks "that no action was more specifically human than to praise." Edith Samuel, with whose husband, Maurice Samuel, Van Doren had a series of radio dialogues on the Bible, has written that whenever she and her husband used to speak of him, "and it was often," they "invariably came back to the Biblical Hebrew word, *hesed.* He was for us the personification of the idea of loving-kindness." Bernard Mandelbaum recently wrote that he entered Columbia College "a pre-medical student. In six months of Humanities with Van Doren I changed to a major in philosophy" and "was eventually ordained as a Rabbi." Mandelbaum also noted that Thomas Merton "was exposed to Mark Van Doren, and ended up a Trappist monk," as well as one of the major religious writers of our time. This influence Merton himself described in detail in *The Seven Storey Mountain.*

Van Doren's relations with those of his students who became poets have an inevitable prominence, and they are amply attested to by his letters. It would be difficult to conceive a more distinguished group of modern American poets than those who were taught or

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heavily influenced by Van Doren: Allen Tate, a friend for almost fifty years; John Berryman; Delmore Schwartz; Thomas Merton; Louis Simpson; Richard Howard; and even Allen Ginsberg. John Gould Fletcher, Archibald MacLeish, and Robert Frost were friends, admirers, and correspondents. In what was to become a major essay in twentieth-century literary criticism, T. S. Eliot wrote of the twenty-six year-old Van Doren's book, *John Dryden* (his doctoral dissertation at Columbia, published in 1920), "It is a book which every practitioner of English verse should study," a valuation reaffirmed in more recent years by Donald Davie.

With Tate, Berryman, and Merton, Van Doren's relations were unusually close, even paternal in the case of the latter two. It was ultimately a source of agony to Van Doren that Merton, Berryman, and Schwartz predeceased him—and that the emotional extremism and chaos of modernity that he so hated got inside of and helped destroy the latter two. In addition to his intelligence and eloquence, it was undoubtedly what Van Doren identified as a partly temperamental disposition to serenity that made him so appealing a figure to so many brilliant but vexed spirits. It was also a constant effort of will, imagination, and belief that made him so serene. The modern problem, he wrote in "Poets and Trimmers," is "thought to be social, but it is theological"; he added, characteristically: "This does not mean that it is easily solved." He credited Eliot with having "restored to poetry the stuff of theology, long absent and all but lost." His own theological piety is especially clear in his writing on Dante, Shakespeare, Hawthorne, and Lincoln. Much of his own belief, attitude, and conduct must be summed up in a passage of dialogue in his play, *The Last Days of Lincoln:*

> *Lincoln:* General, do you want to know what I think [charity] is?
> *General Weitzel:* (Startled, drawing his heels together) I do, sir. So would any living man.
> *Lincoln:* (smiling) Now I may disappoint you. It is simply, I think, the knowledge that other men have souls.

There is something movingly archaic in his piety and love of narrative: "The facts of life are found in story, which poetry has ceased to tell" in our time, he wrote. Tragedy and comedy "are twin ways of dealing with human error: the only concern of *story* when it is serious," he wrote fifteen years later. The narrative, the religious, and the moral were cognate realities for him. He told Maurice Samuel

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that he found poignantly memorable the remark, "If God died in the nineteenth century, man died in the twentieth," and he was as aware of as he was opposed to this sense of "ontological insecurity," *anomie*, and alienation, and did all he could to counteract it in his writing and teaching.

In his analysis and attitude Van Doren prefigured more recent and technical analyses of the crisis of modern character and culture by thinkers such as Peter Berger, William Barrett, Daniel Bell, and Leszek Kolakowski, not to speak of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, whom Van Doren recognized and warmly praised early on. "The pervasive sense of disorientation which has spread through" modern culture and which is a prime "source of the crisis of modernity," Bell has written, is caused by "the lack of language that can adequately relate one to transcendental conceptions."

Both Van Doren's poetry and his prose provide such a language. "Poetry is something that reveals and glorifies existence," he asserted, and in the fifth of the beautiful psalms published in *That Shining Place* (1969) he wrote:

> I will not cease to say your name
> However many smile at me,
> However many claim they know
> You were not here before things were
> Nor will be after. . . .

The achievement or restoration of such sanity is fraught with dangers of fanaticism, wishful thinking, delusion, and ignorance, as every kind of religious fundamentalism perennially shows. Like his friends Mortimer Adler and Thomas Merton, there is an Aristotelian and Thomist cast to Van Doren's mind: he is the poet of Natural Theology, of gratitude, praise, and creation, and of narrative, but in no windy, vague Transcendentalist way, as his judicious but withering essays on Emerson and Whitman show. "The Transcendentalists did not write stories, they emitted sayings, and 'Orphic' at that," he wrote, but Hawthorne "tested their truths in the truth of narrative, and found them wanting. . . . " and:

> In the charming sketch entitled "The Old Manse" [Hawthorne] described his rummaging among old theological books he had found in the attic. They were ancient and dead, yet still not dead as the contemporary gospels were.

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In a brilliant passage foreshadowing both Quentin Anderson's *The Imperial Self* and Ernest Becker's profound discussion of modern neurosis, narcissism, and the "Causa sui" project (in *The Denial of Death*), Van Doren wrote that Hawthorne:

> . . . merely knew that [his age] was wrong when it said with Emerson that self-reliance is a sufficient virtue comprehending all other virtues. . . . "The world has done its best to secure repose without relinquishing evil." . . . And if evil in its extreme forms makes men inhuman by isolating them from their brothers, so does arrogance of spirit. The Transcendental brethren worshipped solitude, which Hawthorne could see only as isolation. His hell, like Dante's, was cold and solitary, a wilderness where nothing blossomed but the will.

MICHAEL D. AESCHLIMAN

FOUR WRITERS

CIGARETTES. By Harry Mathews. Wiedenfeld & Nicolson. $17.95.
THE VOYEUR. By Alberto Moravia. Translated by Tim Parks. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $18.95.
BELOVED. By Toni Morrison. Alfred A. Knopf. $18.95.
THE GOLDEN DROPLET. By Michel Tournier. Translated by Barbara Wright. Doubleday. $16.95.

The nightmarish interweaving of past and present, recalled and imagined; the entanglement of family; people's insatiable attraction to an elusive and partial truth—these themes run through a handful of novels whose differences, however obvious, are finally less striking than their essential similarities. The differences tell us something about the technique and temperament of the individual novelist; the similarities are even more eloquently informative, both about the art of fiction and about fiction's subject, human lives.

The novels' titles foreshadow discrepancies of style and tone. Tournier chooses an amulet whose symbolism is discussed over and over, and whose relation to his hero is both poetically appropriate and abundantly clear. Mathews takes a common, fashionable, harmful article of frequent use and uses it metaphorically, to somewhat obscure but very evocative effect. Moravia deploys an ambigu-

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ous label: of course his hero is a voyeur, but so are other characters in the novel, and the reader is implicated too. There's also the faint suggestion of a case history. Morrison's title does not refer to her heroine but is instead a passionate and incomplete epithet which is also an epitaph. We never learn the dead girl's actual name, and a powerful, unfinished gesture of love is enacted by the word. These titles tell us a good deal about how each novelist goes about presenting his or her materials. Tournier is lavish with vivid, tangible symbols; Mathews is more abstract, deadpan, and removed, leaving more cogitation up to the reader; Moravia, for all his psychological penetration, is also ironically withheld and ambiguous; Morrison is the most sweeping and sympathetic in her treatment of the story; she seems closest to her material.

The lives depicted with such stylistic variations by Tournier, Moravia, Mathews, and Morrison vary widely. We're not in Beattie or Carver country; no disaffected suburbanites or glum neo-Vermonters walk these pages. *The Golden Droplet* recounts a Berber shepherd's odyssey (the word reveals my Eurocentric bias, but I can think of no better one, except possibly pilgrimage) from his native oasis via Oran and Marseille to the *ne plus ultra* of Western chic, the Place Vendôme. Idris's journey takes him from a timeless nomadic past to a harried present both familiar (to us) and exotic (to him). Whether the little shepherd is moving from reality toward artifice is a topic Tournier never tires of elegantly troping.

The narrator-hero of Moravia's *The Voyeur*, a professor of French literature in present-day Rome, looks back nostalgically to his student days in the sixties as the era that made his life meaningful by, among other things, locking him into conflict with his father, also a university professor, in whose house Edoardo and his wife Sylvia live. The most spatially enclosed of these four novels, *The Voyeur* never loses an air of paranoid claustrophobia that tempts one to transform the work in one's imagination into cinema, as has in fact been done with other Moravia novels. The long hall, night noises, rumpled bedclothes would be easy; but the bedridden father's penis, described with a fascinated precision reminiscent of *Portnoy's Complaint*, might be more challenging to the cinematographer.

In *Cigarettes*, Harry Mathews uses fifteen slimmish sections to cut back and forth between 1936 and 1963, and also between and among the lives of thirteen characters; the settings are Saratoga and Greenwich Village, the characters an artist, a lawyer, a critic, a student, parents, lovers, siblings, patients, rivals, and whatever else

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people can be, or become, to one another. *Beloved*, the closest among these to a historical novel, though *Cigarettes* might well qualify in another few decades, deals with the most chronologically distant material: the time is during and after the Civil War, the central place Cincinnati, with numerous flashbacks to a Kentucky plantation and cameos of a Georgia prison camp, Trenton, and other places.

Beloved is not, as might at first appear, the only one of these novels to claim more territory than a single time and place, or for that matter a single plot. Just as Morrison's novel is about much more than the life of a black woman after the Civil War, so *Cigarettes* resists being pigeonholed as a story about particular lovers (though we are shown lovers) or a particular family (though we're shown several). Moravia and Tournier, working on a somewhat smaller scale than the American writers, nevertheless manage not only to pack numerous flashbacks (Moravia) and digressions (Tournier) into their tales, but to achieve thereby a far more complex version of "reality."

All these stories are about the inextricable complexities both of life and of stories about life. If there's no simple plot, there's no one narrator either, no one voice with full authority for the Word. The closest we come to straight first-person narration is in Moravia's Dodo; but (as the novel's title hints) so much of Dodo's attention is devoted to peering into other people's rooms and lives, speculating about the past, and planning various elaborate strategies (does it need saying how much of a presence Proust is here?) that we come to feel Dodo is as passive a narrator as he is a person. Tournier's third-person narration is suave but intrusive; the novel veers toward travelogue which then transforms itself into literary-philosophical discourse. Such generic waverings become more compelling than the relatively straightforward story of Idris's travels. Mathews' third-person omniscient narrator is omniscient about different things, according to which section we're reading; and in an almost invisibly narrow frame, which occurs in the first and last of the sections, a first person narrator turns up, unobtrusive but crucial. It took me a couple of readings to understand who this "I" was. Morrison uses a lot of third-person narrative, but at the very heart of *Beloved* we suddenly hear the voices of all the central characters, sometimes to stunningly poetic effect.

All these novels make knowing use of a mixture of techniques, yet none mounts the kind of pyrotechnical display that obscures the

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action. Mathews has been praised for being ingenious but readable, original but not heartless—and the same could be said for the other three writers, except that the dichotomy between stylistic accomplishment and the sincerity of feeling is so stale, indeed false an issue. Great artists find fresh and elegant ways of presenting material; they have no illusion that the material is new. One could yawn to Morrison or Mathews, as to Proust or Joyce or Tolstoy: love, death, the past, jealousy, families—oh, that's all been done before.

One classic modernist practice is noticeable without being obtrusive in all the novels except *Beloved*. Morrison's characters, most of whom are illiterate, can hardly be expected to have their heads stuffed with literature; but Moravia, Mathews, and Tournier, as if to disclaim specious ideas about originality, incorporate snippets of other texts into their narratives—and more than snippets, ideas; one can read *The Golden Droplet* with reference to Edward Said's *Orientalism*, and it's impossible not to read *The Voyeur* in light of *La Prisonnière* and *Albertine Disparue*. Mathews quotes Jane Bowles, Ford Madox Ford, Raymond Chandler; refers to Clement Greenberg, de Kooning; Moravia's novel is a kind of enactment of a Mallarmé sonnet beloved by its professor-narrator; Tournier, the most capacious, folds relevant passages from *Le Petit Prince*, Valery's "Palme," Alain, Goethe, Wordsworth, and *The Arabian Nights* into his narrative as deftly as a chef folds egg whites into a meringue. These authors' awareness of themselves as makers of fiction doesn't tempt them to varnish their events, characters, or prose with a patina of affectation. On the contrary, the literary self-consciousness, kept in check, enhances our sense of the significance of what's being narrated—broadens our field of subjectivity.

No matter how self-conscious the techniques, these books' subjects, once again, are unabashedly from life. The multiple viewpoints are congruent with reality; so are the less than happy endings. Each of the endings here blends elements of conventional comedy (a marriage resumed in Moravia, a young girl's bright future in Morrison, Idris's reunion with his beloved amulet in Tournier—only Mathews withholds some such pleasure) with tragedy, or at least ironic limbo. Two offstage deaths (we must guess whose) are mentioned on the penultimate page of *Cigarettes*; Dodo's suspense, and with it the reader's, carries over beyond the close of *The Voyeur*; Idris's joy at finding the golden droplet occurs in a context whose grotesquerie augurs the boy's continuing isolation; and any hope brightening the close of *Beloved* is ringed by awful darkness. Mor-

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rison found as she was writing the novel that it was the first volume of a trilogy, so we can look forward to further variations on the use of an ending.

One reason complete happiness isn't possible, these novels unite in showing us, is that knowledge can be acquired but not lost. That truth is what people thirst for doesn't mean the drink is a pleasant one. In *The Voyeur*, Dodo cannot unlearn what he has painstakingly pieced together: the all but certain knowledge that his wife is having an affair with his own father. In *Cigarettes*, answers to many enigmas are teased out by the reader as well as the characters; the truth is like the seminal portrait of Elizabeth, which is cherished, stolen, forged, destroyed, bought, sold, restored—but about which we chiefly learn that it doesn't resemble her. Nor is Elizabeth herself ever physically described. As we're finally getting to know her, late in the novel, she is felled by a stroke and transformed—as by a further artistic abstraction—from a radiantly generous presence to a speechless, wheelchair-ridden invalid.

In *The Golden Droplet*, Idris knows that the innocence of the oasis, where "we have nothing but we lack nothing," can never be restored. He can't say why he leaves but knows he must; the novel is an elaborate allegory of the progress from East to West, reality to image—or is it signified to signifier? Pursuing a blonde Frenchwoman in a Landrover who has taken his photograph and thereby spirited away his soul, the handsome boy himself becomes a fantasy of the East for the image-makers (photographers, advertisers, filmmakers, a dollmaker, a sculptor) he encounters. Like the personage in Wallace Stevens's dreamlike poem "Tea at the Palaz of Hoon," Idris keeps finding himself "more truly and more strange" even as he also keeps losing himself in each successive recreation of reality. There is no final truth; certainly there is no return to the Tabelbala oasis. When Idris finally rediscovers his golden droplet, which was stolen from him by a whore in Marseille, the amulet is in a jeweler's window on the Place Vendome, and Idris, on the sidewalk, wields a pneumatic drill that shatters the plate glass of the window—hardly an idyllic reunion.

It's in *Beloved*, the most ambitious in scope of these novels, that the acquisition of truth about the past is the most problematic. Sethe and Paul D. can free themselves from the ineffable brutalities of their shared and separate pasts, as slaves and fugitives, only by telling and retelling each other what has happened in the past eighteen years. Yet the telling reenacts the horror of slavery, a horror which

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the mere ending of the war is powerless to change. After all, no retelling can bring back what has been lost or killed. Or can it? Sethe's murder of her tiny daughter in a desperate attempt to save the child from slavery at any cost is the center of the many awful events eddying through *Beloved*. Is the girl who turns up on Sethe's doorstep, scarred as the dead child would have been, her age had she lived, truly the murdered daughter come back? If so, what can this mean?

Beloved is among other things a ghost story. I won't give much away in pointing out that Morrison is dealing, on multiple levels, with the return of the repressed. Throughout this courageous novel, the truth is a deeply equivocal thing. Halle, Sethe's husband, goes mad when he learns what has been done to his wife; Paul D., scarred by his years of suffering during and after slavery, thinks of his heart as a locked tobacco tin whose contents are shrivelled—better to keep it shut. All the characters in this novel bear physical or psychic scars, usually both; Morrison is probing the price of survival. The truth reopens wounds; the suffering is terrible, but there is no alternative to knowing. *Beloved* is an extended excursus on the impossibility of forgetting, but this theme is in fact articulated in all these novels. As the shadow narrator says on the first page of *Cigarettes*, "I wanted to understand. I planned someday to write a book about these people. I wanted the whole story."

Is it a coincidence that several startling correspondences link the various novels, or are shared thematic strands responsible? Pascasie, the African woman in *The Voyeur*—knowing yet ignorant, a bit of Africa encapsulated in a European capital—could be a character in *The Golden Droplet;* and her liaison with Dodo is demonically parodied in *Beloved,* where sex between people of different colors and classes is one of a cluster of issues. Along these lines, the sinister link between power and pleasure, sexually expressed in sadism, features in *The Voyeur* and more violently in the unforgettable episode of Morris's death in *Cigarettes,* but is—again—especially crucial in *Beloved.* Voyeurism is both theme and metaphor in all four novels, whether Allan tries to look into Elizabeth's room or Beloved watches Paul D. through cracks in the floor. The disoriented, weirdly poetic utterances of a distressed and sick young woman are among the most memorable moments in two of these tales; unsolved riddles, family secrets are issues in three out of four.

Differences in style and texture make the reading of these

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novels into an experience of substances as diverse as gauzy fabric (the swirls and loops of Morrison's prose), an enamelled ornament (Tournier's meticulous calligraphy), or a cubist composition (Mathews's infallibly crisp placement). But these are matters of surface; the difficult substance beneath, relatively homogeneous and undeniably tragic, is perhaps most beautifully expressed near the close of *Cigarettes,* as the narrator ponders the relation of the past to the present:

> I was only beginning to learn that the dead stay everlastingly present among us, taking the form of palpable vacancies that only disappear when, as we must, we take them into ourselves. We take the dead inside us; we fill their void with our own substance; we become them. The living dead do not belong to a race of fantasy, they constitute the inhabitants of our earth. The longer we live, the more numerous the inviting holes death opens in our lives and the more we add to the death inside us, until at last we embody nothing else. And when we in turn die, those who survive embody us, the whole of us, our individual selves and the crowd of dead men and women we have carried within us.

For *dead* read, at times, *truth* or simply *past*—and there you have the essence beautifully and variously captured by these four works of fiction. The novel is alive and well and living in Paris—and in Rome, and Saratoga, and New York, and Cincinnati, and wherever our memories take us.

RACHEL HADAS

THE OTHER WEST INDIAN POET

X/SELF. By Edward Brathwaite. Oxford University Press. $9.95.

Edward Brathwaite is the *other* West Indian poet. Throughout the English-speaking Caribbean, the poetic activity of a generation has been shaped by two masters: Brathwaite and his exact contemporary Derek Walcott. In North America, however, Walcott is familiar (one anthology even adopts him as a "New York poet"), while Brathwaite's name is hardly known outside Black Studies circles. Yet *X/Self* completes his second poetic trilogy, and he has

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produced several other volumes of poetry, as well as a prodigious series of articles in criticism and literary history, quite apart from his career as a professional historian.

To an American observer, the two poets diverge from a common point of origin: one sets out from T. S. Eliot's taste, the other from his practice. Walcott's early work emerges from the density of Jacobean drama and the metaphysical poets. Brathwaite begins with suites of poems and grows toward trilogies that pursue Eliot's interest in complex rhythms of structure, in the *architectural* possibilities (and problems) involved in making large poems of freestanding lyrics. Even more importantly, he draws inspiration from an Eliot almost forgotten here: the jazz poet, explorer of the whole gamut of American voices and their rhythms, whose recordings inspired Caribbean poets to shape their own speech into poetry.

X/Self explores what Brathwaite calls "Calibanisms"—Joycean wordplay forged under the pressure of exile and colonialism, the blue-notes of language, the black-and-blue notes of battered people. It is a poem of things misheard, misspoken, twisted to advantage. Elsewhere Brathwaite has said of his colonized creole figure, "He's not supposed to get it right." But X/Self is no fool: there's Latin, Chinese, Xhosa in this poem, along with several distinguishable forms of English. His insight is (third-) worldly and his sharp creole tongue can show "doom" in "dome," "fornicalia" in "california," and more:

> how will i know that that click of camera camel humped mo-
> hammed
> will not convert you from island to islam
> tourist to perfect terrorist

This book is eclectic in more than its language. Here, for the first time, Brathwaite explicitly associates his work with the "Magical Realism" of Latin America. Medieval poems, pop tunes, and television shows appear along with myths of Mesoamerica, Africa, and even Asia. There are moments of impudent creole bricolage in the manner of Ishmael Reed, as when in one poem Admirals Perry and Columbus are conflated with Alfred Nobel (who gave us both dynamite and the Prize) and a persistent videotape salesman. Yet the same magic often achieves a phastasmagoric sweep:

> there is a crack within the utter stone of ethiopia
> watch where the mediterranean sea comes seeking through

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where cleopat unmummied peachskin coloured chick
floating to harvest in her berth of hippo milk
loves antony her sallow liver of the olive groves
the widowed nipples of her breasts pout north to slavery

X/Self is notable for impressive conceptual as well as rhetorical power. In the new trilogy, the first two volumes gradually set up a vast mythic framework, inhabited by characters who have in effect both human and geologic (or astronomical) aspects. Thus *Mother Poem* (1977) focuses on women, beginning with the mother who is at the same time the poet's native island of Barbados, set apart in the mothering sea. In contrast, *Sun Poem* (1982) elaborates upon the linear career of the father, symbolized variously as the trajectory of the Sun from dawn to dark, the sequential colors of the rainbow, and an African spirit (a *loa*) swept from home to be cast up on the island's Atlantic shore.

The setting of *Mother Poem* and *Sun Poem* is Caribbean, but *X/Self* stages a kind of Hannibal/Caliban coup. Where his first trilogy (*The Arrivants*, 1967–69) investigated the realities under our ingrained myths of Africa as the "dark continent," the jungle, *X/Self* proposes that we consider Europe mythically, under the figure of the "Alph"; that we take Mont Blanc as the center and central image of Europe, its holy mountain. Mont Blanc's counterpart or counterweight is Mount Kilimanjaro, the African hub of histories, the spirit behind the kraal and the village compound, as the Alp stands behind Rome.

X/Self is most concerned with the European element in this scheme, with empire and responses to it; but the poem is no glib attack on "the West," as is apparent in the lines that serve as a refrain throughout:

rome burns
and our slavery begins.

In Brathwaite's myth, Rome presents an equilibrium of sure values. Its decline brings fragmentation and imbalance. Europe's response to its own disequilibrium is expansion, and an ethos of depredation replaces Rome's universal encircling organization. Behind these changes is a mysterious force that originates midway between the two "domes" in the bowl of the Sahara, an unpredictable dynamism in the form of the dry harmattan wind that sweeps out over Africa

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and the Atlantic, carrying with it drought, hurricanes, and the foraging vultures of empire. Through the long waves of such history, the two mountain hubs persist as reference points. Thus in the course of time the dome of Mount Blanc is reiterated in the Roman capitol, the dome of St. Peter's (sign of a marginal, "creole" religion's conquest of the center), and the dome of the American Capitol.

X/Self brigs this mythic world very much into the foreground, but it is still primarily a poem of voices. Altogether, the trilogy creates a small but enormously resonant pantheon of ancestral figures: mother/island, father/westering sun, and X/Self the son, inheritor of this charged landscape, which may mold him in a variety of ways—after Sycorax and Prospero, he may be Caliban or Ariel.

The name X/Self seems to designate every possible son of those parents: A colonized self, X'd out or erased: an ex-self. Or an ex-oself, an outsider, a resistant self on the margins of empire. The crossed or hybrid self of the quintessential creole acting both within and against empire: the pliant satraps, the refractory peasants, and at the frontiers the obscure populations who could be perceived only as monkeys or savages, gorillas or guerrillas. "X/Self" includes quislings like the inconsequential nephew who writes the book's first poem, but it also includes his uncle Severus, the first African to become emperor of Rome.

But the best of X/Self are the heroes "in reverse" like Hannibal and Severus, un-Fausts, un-Prosperos, who originate from the African, not the European, hub and go on to penetrate Rome from the margin. The poem links African Hannibal with Quetzalcoatl, the Aztec (rainbow-)plumed serpent. The line of Hannibal and Quetzalcoatl then leads through a series of exuberant figures, musicians, poets, boxers, resistance fighters, to end with Xango, the explosive West African god whose cult is now firmly established in the Americas. It's daunting to note how often the quislings and dolts here are writers, mere scribes and page-poets as opposed to the speech-poets and other positive figures: performers, extroverts, makers of music and thunder. All these can be distinguished as radiant rather than grasping heroes; heroes whose emblems are expansive: the circle rather than the missile, the disc of sun, the shock of thunder, or this spreading silk-cotton tree:

> and i beheld the cotton tree
> guardian of graves rise upward from its monument of grass crying

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aloud in its vertical hull calling
for crashes of branches vibrations of leaves

there was a lull of silver

and then the great grandfather gnashing upwards from its teeth
of roots. split down its central thunder
the stripped violated wood crying aloud its murder . . .

and our great odoum
triggered at last by the ancestors into your visibility
crashed

into history

When that bough breaks, down comes X/Self, who carries the multiple masks and "calibanizing" voices of *The Arrivants* beyond that trilogy's American context and out into the global village: "he will shatter outwards to your light and calm and history."

Brathwaite has again given us a complex vision of the interplay of cultures and depicted in the midst of it a renewed self: exuberant, expansive, exploding.

LAURENCE BREINER

NEW WORLD, NEW LANGUAGE

IN THE STORM OF ROSES. By Ingeborg Bachmann. Translated by Mark Anderson. Princeton University Press. $27.50.
THE THIRTIETH YEAR. By Ingeborg Bachmann. Translated by Michael Bullock. Holmes & Meier. $19.95.

Ingeborg Bachmann was perhaps the most influential thinker and artist of her generation writing in German. Considering how little of her work has been made available in English up until now, such a statement might seem a gross exaggeration easily refuted by the wider fame of Günter Grass, Paul Celan, Max Frisch, Peter Handke, or Christa Wolf. What is important to note, however, is that each of these figures has at one time or another made open claim to his or her indebtedness to Bachmann as a writer and human being. Born in 1926 in Klagenfurt, Austria, Bachmann began her meteoric career as a young poet of genius, receiving thun-

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derous applause from the Gruppe 47 gathering of writers and artists in postwar Germany. On the heels of this, however, she soon became a frustrated and oppressed public figure; playing the role of a darling blonde-haired muse was completely out of sync with the serious questions she wished to raise in her work. After living for short periods in Munich, Berlin, Paris, and Zurich, including a year spent as a member of Harvard University's International Seminar, she eventually would deny her lyric gift, turn to prose, and end her brief life as the victim of a mysterious fire in her Rome apartment in 1973. Only recently has it become possible to see beyond the complex figure Bachmann cut and to trace the genius and influence of the work itself.

"'No new world without a new language'" is the conclusion the narrator comes to in the title story of *The Thirtieth Year*, Bachmann's first collection of short stories published in 1961 and now reissued by Holmes & Meier in Michael Bullock's fine translation of 1964. Though Bachmann gained her first fame as a poet, her prose often serves as the best gloss of what is expressed in her verse, this statement in particular serving as the keystone to her entire career. Having written a thesis on and against Heidegger while a student at the University of Vienna, Bachmann's most important influences were philosophical rather than literary. Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna School provided her with the impetus to explore reality, history, and human relationships through language and its ability to both shape and imprison, while the paradox she herself had to face as a writer was that language, the very tool by which she hoped to heal and mend, might itself be more diseased than its subject. Hence, to read Bachmann is to know not only the limits of language in capturing experience precisely for how it is lived and suffered, but also to understand and respect the power by which language can inflict as much suffering as it is meant to expose.

The limits of speech and society play a role in all six of the stories in *The Thirtieth Year*. In "Youth in an Austrian Town," children are described as being "only allowed to whisper and for the rest of their lives they will never lose the habit of whispering," their experience of the war forcing them to remain passive and unknowing victims of the violence inflicted upon their youth. Meanwhile, the narrator of "The Thirtieth Year," who wishes "to see who he was and who he has become" at thirty, admits to himself that "you are merely living in a country furnished by the ancients, that your views are only rented, the pictures of your world hired." Even more disillusioning is the idea that the "elimination of injustice, of oppres-

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sion . . . still maintain the disgraces of the past," which through "the continued existence of the words, may therefore be reestablished at any moment." Only after a near-fatal car accident do the "first sentences" come to him, those "in which the world as a whole appeared," the story ending on an ironic note when Bachmann borrows from those same ancients to implore, "I say unto thee: Rise up and walk! None of your bones is broken."

If this last quotation sounds a bit stilted or pedantic, it is because Bachmann's urge to press her argument often comes at the expense of her art. In "Everything," a story in which a father despairs at not having been able to protect his son from "the trap" of society and its teachings, the narrator comments, "It was all a question of whether I could preserve the child from our language until he had established a new one and could introduce a new era." Exactly what this language would be or how it would shape that new era is sometimes harder to understand in the context of the character thinking about it than as a reflection of the genuine import such an idea holds for Bachmann. Yet the earnestness with which she grapples with large ideas is also what forces the reader to concentrate more upon them than the simple pleasures of storytelling. Bachmann's enormous stature in postwar German letters came as a result of her ability to face the hardest issues with the most difficult questions, her icy contempt for what society had become evident here in "Among Murderers and Madmen," where postwar society is described as "a world in which no one knew any more what he could boast of and what he felt ashamed of and whether anything in this world in which we were citizens still corresponded to this boast and this shame." Like the aging judge in "A Wildermuth," Bachmann remains a relentless seeker of truth. Though knowing that the language and experience available to him through history will no longer allow the truth to be known, the judge still feels compelled to attempt its definition, if only to avoid sustaining a lie, an act which results in "a continual cheap agreement between object and word, feeling and word, deed and word. The well-brought-up word that is forced to accept this mute world . . . with compassion. Indolent apathetic word set on agreement at all costs."

This kind of stridency is also what created and finished Bachmann as a poet at a very early age. *In the Storm of Roses* consists of selections from her only two books of poetry, published in 1953 and 1956, as well as offerings from later poems which appeared in journals but were never collected. Both the introduction and translations

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by Mark Anderson are good despite the poems sometimes suffering from a flattened cadence devoid of the rhythms which connect Bachmann to the classical tradition in German. Yet the contempt and sorrow still remain, such as here in "Message":

> From the cadaverous warmth of heaven's vestibule
> the sun appears.
> There are no immortal souls up there,
> only the war dead. Or so we hear.
>
> And light pays no heed to decay. Our godhead,
> History, has reserved us a grave
> from which there is no resurrection.

For Bachmann, history not only promises us nothing more than a grave but also presents us with a life consisting of "Mortgaged Time" (the title poem from her first collection) where the only certainty is that "Harder days are coming." Severe and defiant, hers is a voice unwilling to settle for a comfortable refuge within poetry, her outrage at the existence of suffering reaching such a pitch that at times it embodies an expressionism bordering on the surreal, reminiscent of Trakl, and evident here in "Early Noon":

> Where Germany's sky blackens the earth
> its beheaded angel seeks a grave for its hate
> and hands you the bowl of its heart.
>
> A handful of pain is lost over the hill.

Bachmann's ability here to make phrases like "the bowl of its heart" and "handful of pain" function as both concrete and abstract terms illustrates her finest strength as a poet, namely a talent to aim at the discussion of sweeping historical issues while also retaining a sense of mystery within particulars.

Yet Bachmann was also sensitive enough to have learned early that such outrage cannot remain focused on any one issue or era without the poetry becoming derivative of its own subject matter. It is no surprise then that poems from her second collection are wider-ranging, at times more abstract, but also more mature because they deal with the poet herself. In the middle of "Curriculum Vitae," Bachmann sets down her ideas about relations between the sexes while at the same time introducing her own more personal note:

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Even our mothers have
dreamed of their men's futures,
imagined them as mighty
revolutionaries, lonely,
yet bent over the flaming bush
after prayers in the garden,
hand in hand with the babbling
child of their love. My sad father,
why were you so silent then,
nor ever thought past tomorrow?

It would be a mistake, however, to label her a confessional poet concerned simply with family values and love relations as so many American contemporaries are, for deeply involved with Bachmann's notions about love is the idea that language remains the culprit by imprisoning love within historical definitions. In fact, so concerned is Bachmann to break out of standard norms and speech that the most frequent voice she writes in is that of the male. Later this became almost a personal stamp for her work in prose, while here "Land of Fog" gives us a glimpse of her eerie male perspective and its concern with speech:

Faithless is my love,
I know, sometimes she sways
on heels into town,
kissing bar glasses with her straw
deep in their mouths,
finding the right words for everyone.
But I don't understand this language.

Though this last holds out the possibility of being spoken by a female lover, what is important is that language is the arena in which the battle is lost. As time went on, Bachmann became more and more concerned with reevaluating speech, her voice taking on the quality of prayer in poems like "Word and Afterword" where she writes, "Word, be one of us,/enlightened, distinct, beautiful./ Certainly an end must come/ to its cautious living." What Bachmann lacked, however, was the stoicism of an Auden who could admit, "Poetry makes nothing happen," and still go on with the task, for while the last poems she wrote sporadically after the turn to prose are in many ways the most interesting, what they reveal is a poet trying to justify the fact of why she no longer writes poetry. Her final

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poem, "No Delicacies," is the severest statement on this matter, Bachmann's frustration tempting her to destroy the language itself:

> Must I,
> with this hail-battered head,
> with writing cramps in this hand,
> under the pressure of three hundred nights,
> rip this paper apart,
> sweep away the plotted word operas,
> destroying thus: I you and he she it
>
> we you?
>
> (Still should. The others should.)
>
> My share, it should be dispersed.

That Bachmann continued to work productively throughout her career, along the way constructing a broad oeuvre of poems, stories, essays, opera libretti, radio plays, and a novel, is perhaps the strongest testament to her nerve as a writer and thinker given the harrowing skepticism she maintained throughout. With any luck, more of her work will be made available in translation sometime soon, for though she may not be the most entertaining of writers, she is certainly one of the most intense. Language remains the critical mass tipping the scale of our thought and action, and it is through writers like Ingeborg Bachmann that, though it may be too much or too late to ask for the truth, we may at least have better means to avoid the political and historical, that is, the linguistic lie.

PETER FILKINS

READING THE JEWISH BIBLE

CONGREGATION: CONTEMPORARY WRITERS READ THE JEWISH BIBLE. Edited by David Rosenberg. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $29.95.

The Bible doesn't record any words of Job after the whirlwind has finished speaking to him: neither is there much comfort in his restituted life. After all, as David Shapiro's mother observes in

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the poet's essay on Proverbs, "He didn't get back his original children." If our own times can be located anywhere in the Jewish Bible, it's in the aftersound of Job. With the difference that no comprehensible voice spoke from the Holocaust. At all.

But everyone goes right on talking, if only because we have the faculty and are not animals who, as William James observed, may indeed possess souls, yet are not granted that release from their condition afforded by speech.

The Jewish Bible contains the same Books as the King James Version, arranged in a different order. Part I (Torah, or The Books of Moses) is the same. Part II of the Jewish Bible (Prophets) begins with Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, followed by the familiar prophets of the Old Testament. Daniel and Lamentations, however, are numbered among the Writings in Part III, along with the Wisdom Books, Ruth, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Chronicles. These hieratic and emphatic differences indicate that fundamental distinction between Jew and Gentile, and even between Jew and Jew, which underlies what might be called the anti-ecumenical otherness of the People of the Book.

Congregation: Contemporary Writers Read the Jewish Bible, edited by David Rosenberg, assembles thirty-seven essays on thirty-four Books of The Book. Jonah, Psalms, and Daniel each receive two essays; Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah and Haggai are omitted. Rosenberg asked each writer to produce a personal essay introducing one biblical book. Whether the writer was allotted a "big" book, such as Genesis, Samuel, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, or Ruth, or one of the lesser writings, Prophets, the assignment is difficult because there is a powerful and daunting tradition of commentary on the Bible; because our century has scanted and debased the language of faith; and because no matter what the scale or glamour of the text assigned, nothing less than the very best, the very wisest, the most credible response will be in any measure adequate to the text it depends on.

Phillip Lopate's profoundly personal meditation on the story of Samson and Delilah in Judges, and on his own difficulties with women (his mother's legacy), uncovers a new dimension of biblical prophecy. Comparing his physically powerful but incapable father and adulterous, castrating mother to the vulnerable strongman and archetypal temptress, Lopate casts his own bachelorhood in prophetic light. The Book of Judges affords him a psychological prognosis, and Lopate's profound ambivalence about women, convinc-

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ingly aligned with Samson's appears fated if not fatal, a personal destiny foreshadowed in the scriptural.

Biblical scholarship assigns the authorship of Exodus to numerous hands. One author, known as "J," gets credit for the original strand which was then expanded, embroidered upon and normalized by later redactors. Harold Bloom, in a leap of inspired scholarship, claims to recognize the voice of the original author whenever it appears, rather as Coleridge said he would know a line of Wordsworth if he came upon it in the middle of the desert. The author known as "J"—so uncanny, so singular, so much a visitation (as was Shakespeare)—disturbs Bloom deeply. The disturbance impels Bloom to question his renowned theory of literary influence and, more crucially, to investigate "J's" version of Yahweh, which varies significantly from that of normative Judaism. This wholehearted excursion into the nature of original divinity transforms literary scholarship into a kind of poetry and partakes of the sublime.

"Two pictures, divided by an old piano—Ruth in *The Song of the Lark*, my grandfather in his *yarmulke*" dominate Cynthia Ozick's examination of the Book of Ruth. Ozick locates herself in this tableau as a young girl, trying on the one hand to fathom the orthodox figure in the photograph, and on the other hand drawn to the flowery field with a young woman identified by her mother as "Ruth gleaning in the fields of Boaz." The grandfather remains forever frozen in his Kiev study, no new information forthcoming. But Ruth may be considered as a woman who made an extraordinary choice; her character may be fleshed out when the writer's imagination engages the overtones and implications of the brief, biblical account. Using Ozick's emblematic tableau, the author plays a melody on that mediating keyboard, a song of personal choice, of the nature of singularity, of historical action and personal need and messianic promise.

Where Lopate, Ozick and Bloom appropriate their topics in ways that heighten both the text and their own vocations, David Shapiro allows Proverbs to set his tone. In place of the poet's wonted passion there is a worldly, measured, proverbial calm. By acknowledging a strength in Proverbs that goes beyond his own experience, Shapiro can harmonize his own past, his impulses, and the difficulties of the text. Geoffrey Hartman's essay on Numbers and Mark Mirsky's exploration of the Book of Daniel also have this quiet strength, buttressed by their own Hebrew scholarship. Mirsky incorporates an account of a lesson with Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchick

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into his reflections, which illuminates (coincidentally) the soul of Ozick's grandfather. The sayings of the Talmudists, the cogitations of the learned, introspective Jew, and the teachings of the contemporary *rebbe* occur in the same intellectual space, outside of time. Attainment of that timeless conversation is one of the chief delights and consolations of the soul. The soul, which is to the social self as the human is to the animal, is released through speech.

Consolation is not only to the learned, nor does a mastery of Hebrew necessarily align the spirit. Stephen Berg's essay on the King James Habakkuk is titled "Our Ignorance." Berg responds specifically to God's voice in Habakkuk, which he links to "those moments throughout the Old Testament when God's voice comes from a different source, a depth of thought that unsettles logic and gives language an intelligence beyond ordinary human powers that forces us to *interpret* and continue interpreting, make us feel we have heard a voice from a strange realm—where truth is located outside us but includes our thoughts, actions, destinies, origins." Berg's reading wrestles with the meaning of salvation, of redemption, and the soul. His "voice of God," like Bloom's "J," the sayings of Mrs. Shapiro, and Phillip Lopate's account of the terrors of love, moves me directly. Stephen Berg gains my assent when he says "we."

In a book called *Congregation*, the use of the first person plural merits special attention:

> If David is history's darling, then we, all the modern fools—liars, jugglers, wizards without song—still have Saul. (Jerome Charyn, "I Samuel")
>
> * * *
>
> That vision of the resurrection, that consolation, is offered to every generation, for every generation needs it—and ours more than any before us. (Elie Wiesel, "Ezekiel")
>
> * * *
>
> We modern Jews, whether religious or secular, whether Zionist or anti-Zionist, communist, socialist, capitalist, cannot help reading the words of Nehemiah as blueprints of today's action, as a prologue in a history that may be moving forward but does so in a peculiarly cyclical manner, so that the past becomes the pattern for the present and casts us as members of a Messianic search party, whether we like it or not. (Anne Roiphe, "Nehemiah")

These are "we"s I hearken not unto. They are the "we" of public

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speeches, loudspeakers, and community fund drives, the "we" of rehash, homiletic commentary, and compulsory assent, respectively. Rhetorical wheezing both false and self-serving, or if that's too harsh, call it then a sin of inattention, of one person addressing a crowd seeking the lowest common denominator, rather than one human taking the trouble to address another. Such careless language undermines community, and calls for an echo instead of listening for a response.

Just as rhetoric can proclaim posture masquerading as position, so can egoism lead to essays that are heartless, self-serving, or diminishments of the text. Poets who refer to a scriptural book as a poem, essayists who treat the Bible as an occasion for literary analysis, memoirists who treat their literary career as a significant outcome of human truth, are either denying their souls, or defending themselves against the vitality of The Book.

Between the poles of inspiration and failure lies the broad equator. In their entirely respectable essays, Max Apple, Mordecai Richler, Richard Howard, and Robert Pinsky summon varying degrees of text and memory to sound the dissonances of secular Judaism. Their readings conjure faith avoided, outgrown, or replaced but not disowned. Whether they are to be regarded as assimilated, or exiled even from the Dispersion, these writers avow a Jewishness rooted neither in observance, nor in community. Even the distempered Gordon Lish, spewing contumely on the Bible, claims that his churlishness makes him a more genuine Jew than those worshippers of the idol, the Book. Such behavior looks even more unlovable when compared to Jay Neugeboren's childhood dilemma, when he felt both too Jewish and not Jewish enough. One part of me believes that being a Jew finally has to do more with these discomforts and atavisms—the bagels and lox stuff—than does the magnetic power of sublime discourse, with its conversations on the soul, and the uncanniness of solitude.

The uncanny figure of Franz Kafka enters nearly every essay I admire in *Congregation*. This loner, visionary, maker of parables, at once guilt-torn and ambitious, an indelible voice and elusive person despite volumes upon volumes, Kafka capably stands for the Jews, as vexed a question to himself as to others.

Isaac Bashevis Singer doesn't mention Kafka, but he did write a story called "The Man Who Knew Kafka." And his memoir for "Genesis" will have the final say here: "Whenever I take the Bible down from my bookcase and I begin to read it, I cannot put it down.

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I always find new aspects, new facts, new tensions, new information in it. I sometimes imagine that, while I sleep or walk, some hidden scribe invades my house and puts new messages, new names, new events into this wonderful book."

LAURANCE WIEDER

SR 1989

WINTER *Poetry and the Criticism of Poetry:* essays by Spencer Brown, R. S. Gwynn, Ben Howard, Samuel Hynes, Heinz R. Kuehn, Robert McPhillips, William H. Pritchard; reviews by John M. Aden, J. A. Bryant, Jr., Calvin S. Brown, Brendan Galvin, William Harmon, Donald E. Stanford; poetry by F. D. Reeve and others · Fiction by William Hoffman

SPRING *Living by Words—Autobiography Today:* essays by James M. Cox, Wallace Fowlie, Pat C. Hoy II, Leonard Kriegel, Louis D. Rubin, Jr., and Eudora Welty; reviews by Calvin S. Brown, George Core, Robert B. Heilman, David Miller, Sam Pickering · Poetry by G. E. Murray, John Frederick Nims, and others · Fiction by Leslie Norris

SUMMER *Shakespeare and the Renaissance:* essays by Leonard F. Dean, Martin Dodsworth, and Russell Fraser; reviews by J. A. Bryant, Jr., Michael L. Hall, and others; poetry by Anthony Hecht and Michael Mott · *Seeing the Elephant:* stories of the American West by Kent Nelson, Peter Schneeman, Christopher Tilghman, and Chilton Williamson, Jr. · Poetry

FALL *The British Novel from Conrad to V. S. Naipaul:* essays and reviews by Bruce King, Mark Kinkead-Weekes, Edward Krickel, John Rees Moore, Merritt Moseley, B. L. Reid, Walter Sullivan, and others · *Southern Occasions:* reviews by M. E. Bradford, Calvin S. Brown, Donald E. Stanford, Mark Winchell · Fiction · Poetry

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LETTERS

To the Editor:

First let me say how much I enjoyed your "Comment" (*PR* 2, 1988) on the Israeli-Palestinian tangle that followed your "Comment" (*PR* 1, 1988) on Allan Bloom. It was such excellent common sense in the midst of so much dangerous blather that I felt it was a service to all of us who feel deeply on the issue and sense that hysteria has swept judgment before it—especially among intellectuals who are Jews.

Reading for a second time your review of Bloom, I found myself in agreement through two-thirds of the essay, that is, your defense of the book's challenge to think, your warning that "ideological dismissals of ideas that go against the grain of comfortable cliches are very modish today," the observation that "the book is actually two books, one a rambling history of philosophy and related subjects, the other a running dismissal of college education." Whether the connection, as you say, is "largely forced," I am not quite so sure. Through large sections of *The Closing of the American Mind* I felt exactly that. Still, it did seem to me that events on the college campus, the malaise in the social system and contemporary political philosophy were connected even if Bloom was not precise. Your warning bell about "the pushing of the concept of democracy to wild extremes. . . . ," the exhortation that we think about "the effect of a free market ideology on the current emphasis on sexual and psychological freedom," and your speculation that "future historians might well think of our educational defects as the underside of the expansion of democracy," I either agreed with or found myself reflecting further upon.

However, I respectfully disagree with some of the assertions in the last part of your essay. I think you have misread Bloom. Is it a specific set of values he is arguing for, or the notion of values as part of a university education?

Well, you can retort, "Don't you *have* to have an *actual set* of values, if you posit their importance?" Not entirely—in fact we see how much of a "relativist" Bloom himself has become. It is the idea that there are values which I felt the book was arguing for—not a set of rigid, particular values. *The Closing of the American Mind* insists that a student must think about values and develop, discuss what his, hers, are going to be, rather than assuming that there are *none*, that all is simply relative.

I thought the book quite strong on this issue, and I come to my second disagreement with your reading of Bloom, which is only an elaboration of the first. You dismiss the university's mandate to give the student "a way of life." If this is a crude set of absolutes, dogma, political (or racial) ideology—I share your distaste for "values" on a college campus. Still as a graduate of Harvard, a "Harvard man" of the antique fifties (Harvard of today is hardly so attractive with its predatory tuition fees), I would say that "a way" of looking derived from the habit of looking at opposite sides of a question is possible. It is the "way" of looking from the perspective of books as well as contemporary ex-

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perience. This "way of life" is the mandate of the university in my opinion.

In the debate of the university's teaching of values, Bloom is advocating a return to a stress on the importance of classical literature in which the debate over values, democracy, aristocracy, has been going on for some time. Contemporary debate, I think, should draw on such sources. It is a shallow debate when it does not. This is the book's message for me—it is not a demonism of Nietzche which arouses Bloom's scorn, but a demonism derived from Nietzsche which has no understanding of its sources, no perspective, no tempering of claims to absolute knowledge by the realization that these ideas have been debated in the past.

What I like best in *The Closing of the American Mind* is the scene in which Bloom's students circulate the pages of Plato on the dangers of mass hypnotism, mass thinking, in the midst of a student revolt—one characterized by the unattractive qualities of such phenomena. These are the values, this is the "way of life" which he evidently did teach, and which I hope to teach. The "way of the book" as opposed to the "way of information" is too often not valued in the modern university with its cheap contempt for the humanities. It is the contempt of businessmen who see the university as a laboratory for their success. Now however, the contempt for an educational elite, of thinking for its own sake, has come home to roost in the sciences, from the echoes I hear. We have a disaster in the high schools. The graduate schools in mathematics are depending on foreign students. The mathematicians complain to me that the "value" of education, of teaching, has been so debased in American society that students see the inevitable sacrifices as foolish. I don't need proof from other disciplines, however, to convince me. I feel the superiority of the "way of looking" I was taught at Harvard, and I try to give my students some feeling for it in the midst of a system of examinations that degrades them, their experience of education, and finally, me. Too few people writing about the university today have any real experience of the classrooms at the lower levels.

You accuse Bloom of insulting *Partisan Review*: "Bloom also makes an ignorant gaffe when he says *Partisan Review* was hostile to the great modernists—Proust, Joyce, Mann, Kafka. The opposite was of course true." I went back to reread Bloom's reference to *Partisan Review*, and, unless I am missing a page not included in the index, he never says that *Partisan Review* was hostile to the modernists, rather that modernism was publicized in "the early *Partisan*," a socialist review, though several of the modernist giants, in their private convictions, were aristocrats. This seems ironic to him. You are right to resent his condescension to the editors of *Partisan Review*, but it is the tone, not the specific remark that is at issue. (I know that T. S. Eliot's politics were conservative, but Kafka's certainly are inscrutable.) Still, Bloom has touched an interesting issue, the conservative and radical in modern literature, but one that is too complex for labels, left, right, and so on.

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Finally, I think that Bloom is arguing against "absolute values" when he points out that "absolute relativism" is just as great a tyranny and that its intellectual foundation is superficial. I understand Bloom to be asking us as Americans to realize that the Constitution and democracy do not preach "absolute relativism" but only a moderate relativism based on a mutual respect for democratic procedures. When you state your own repugnance for "pushing the concept of democracy to wild extremes" I believe both of you are on common ground.

Mark Mirsky
New York

William Phillips Replies:

I am glad to see that Mark Mirsky agrees with most of my observations about Bloom and the state of college education. On the question of the teaching of values, the question is what values. Certainly, intellectual values should be fostered: a respect for knowledge, curiosity about the intellectual past, open-mindedness, rationality, etc. On the other hand, the university is clearly not the place to propagate ideas about how to live. It is in this area that teaching deteriorates into talk about life today and into the various notions about relevance to students' lives.

Some years ago, it will be recalled, a student sued Columbia University for failing to impart wisdom to him. A judge ruled properly, in my opinion, that the the university is supposed to teach knowledge not wisdom.

As for Bloom's remark about our early attitude to the modernist writers, perhaps I should have made it clearer that Bloom does not seem to be aware that we knew that writers like Joyce and Proust were not radicals. But this was precisely our policy: to value not only the great modernists but any new writers of talent, regardless of their politics.

William Phillips
Boston

To the Editor:

Karen Wilkin's article (*PR* #1, 1989) on the recent gallery offerings shows a disregard of the origins of the current emphases in the plastic arts to which she refers. The "yearning" for "tangible physical substance" (her terms) among painters which she dates from 1980 is not by any means a new response to the flatness of the canvas surface. As far back as 1919 Kurt Schwitters used wood and other objects on the surface of the canvas, as did Max Ernst in 1922, in obvious violation of the dictum of flatness. Also in a period closer to the present, Jackson Pollock, among many others, added objects to the surface in a bid for "physicality." Why does Ms. Wilkin not credit a similar "yearning" among these and other acknowledged masters? In my own modest case I began to make paintings, shown in New York from 1977 to 1987, with a prominent raised element, and I was not alone in this kind of endeavor which

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precedes the 1980s when she dates what she refers to as the "zeitgeist."

As for the "painted reliefs" which Ms. Wilkin mentions as another example of 1980s "yearning," may I point to high relief sculptures, some multicolored, which I first made in 1950 and continued to make into this decade. As for what she calls "the aggressive," if that can be construed as a virtue when applied to some recent work, may I remind readers that what was thought to be aggressive in 1950 or 1960 is now considered lyrical. Pollock's paintings went through that metamorphosis as has the work of others. Later in her article, Ms. Wilkin refers, pejoratively, by implication, to earlier slender sculpture in describing James Wolfe's work. To quote: "For once the cliche of describing slender metal sculpture as 'drawing in space' seems apt." Such a statement insults the adventuresome work done in the forties, fifties, and sixties, when the phrase was first coined, by sculptors Hare, Lassau, David Smith, and myself, not to neglect Giacometti, to whom we all humbly acknowledged our debt.

I think that the neglect by Ms. Wilkin of earlier work, painting, sculpture, and high relief, amounts to a gross exaggeration of the value of current work in relation to the inventions of older artists. It also fails to help enlighten the art public which often assumes, especially when it appears in the prestigious *Partisan Review*, the written word to be authoritative. Otherwise why write about art?

Herbert Ferber
New York

Karen Wilkin Replies:

Mr. Ferber, whose work I am certainly familiar with, faults me for oversimplifying the immensely complex relationship of literal flatness, illusion, and three-dimensional structure in twentieth century art and for neglecting the historical evolution of the issue. Of course I have. I feel strongly that an article that deals briefly with a variety of current exhibitions is not the ideal forum for an exhaustive lesson in the history of modern art. Nonetheless, Mr. Ferber's points deserve comment.

He sets great store by early examples of relief applications to painting; he has chosen his illustrations with some care, but, I would suggest, equally oversimplifies them in his discussion. Was Kurt Schwitters, for example, really concerned about the "dictum of flatness" in 1919 or was he, like his Cubist colleagues, questioning the difference between the painted illusions that were the legacy of the Renaissance and real bulk? (Picasso's relief constructions, which date from at least 1913, might have been more apt and earlier examples.) By the "dictum of flatness," is Mr. Ferber referring to the popular misunderstanding of Clement Greenberg's trenchant observations about modernist painting, first written in the 1940s, or Maurice Denis's often quoted statement of 1890 that a painting ". . .before being a battle horse, a nude woman, or some anecdote is essentially a plane surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order"?

Mr. Ferber takes exception to my categorizing the phrase "drawing in space" as a cliche. It is not slender

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metal sculpture but the phrase itself that has become trite and hackneyed. When first coined, it was a fresh and apt description of some of the most original and innovative sculpture ever made; more recently, it has been applied quite indiscriminately to just about anything linear and three-dimensional. If Mr. Ferber had read my monograph on David Smith (Abbeville Press, 1984), he would know that I am extremely familiar with "earlier slender sculpture" and hardly regard it pejoratively.

I am sorry that Mr. Ferber should feel that my concentration on what is in front of me and my attempt to find words for my experience of that work amounts to neglect of its predecessors. Why does he assume that serious discussion of the recent carries with it the preconception that recent is better?

Karen Wilkin
New York

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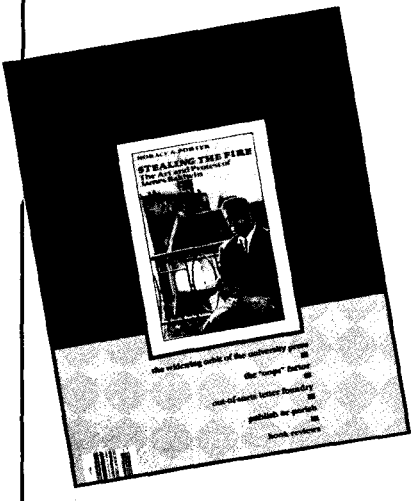

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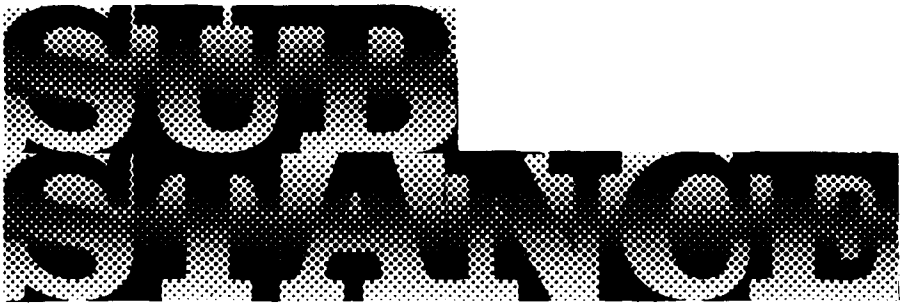

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Romeo and Juliet (1988) by Jules Olitski. Acrylic and enamel on canvas. 5' 7 and 1/2" x 12'6". Courtesy André Emmerich Gallery.

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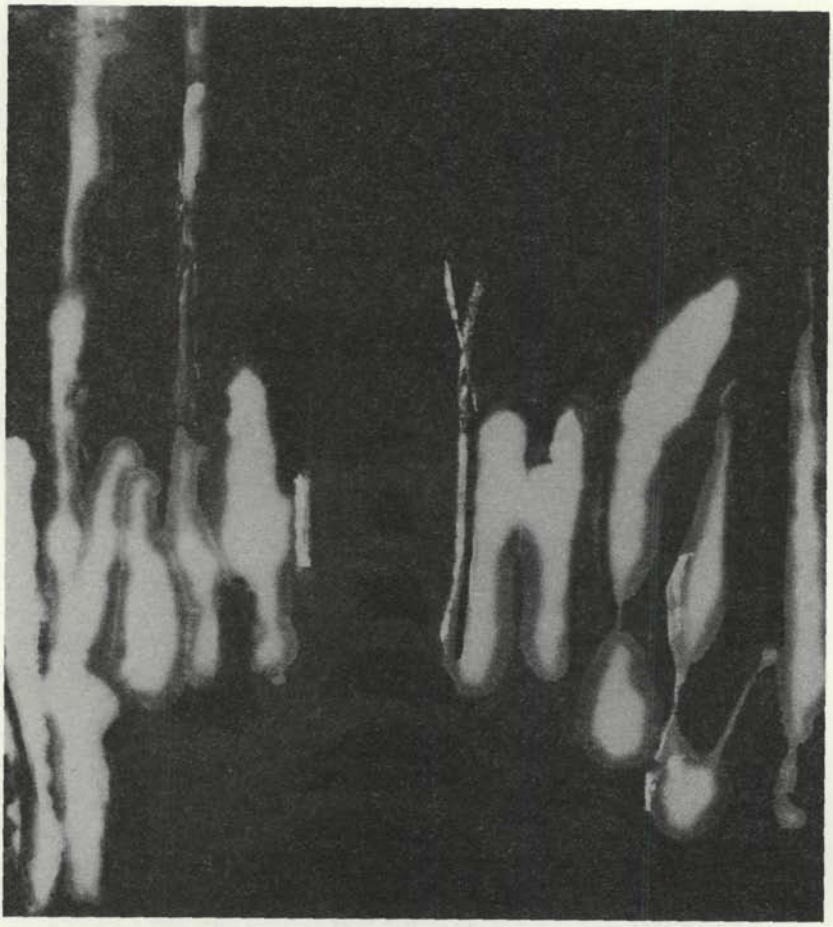

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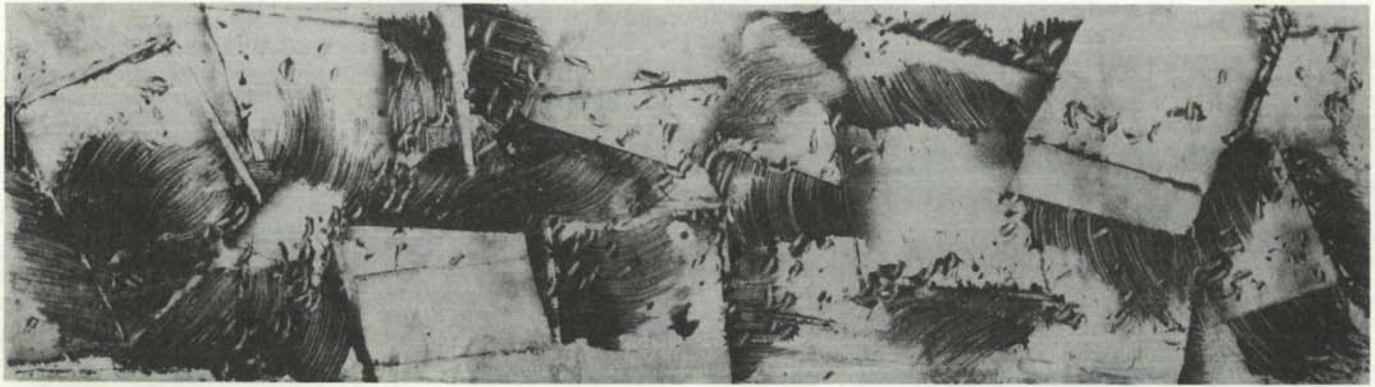

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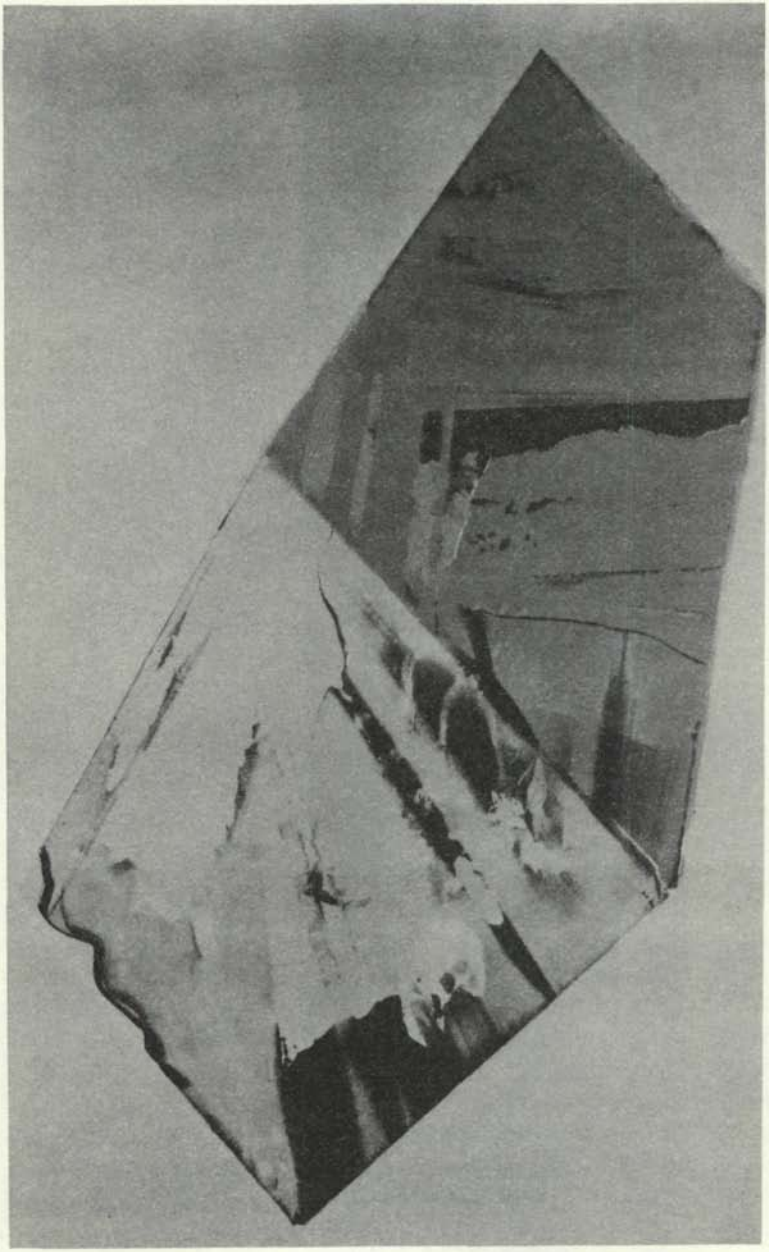

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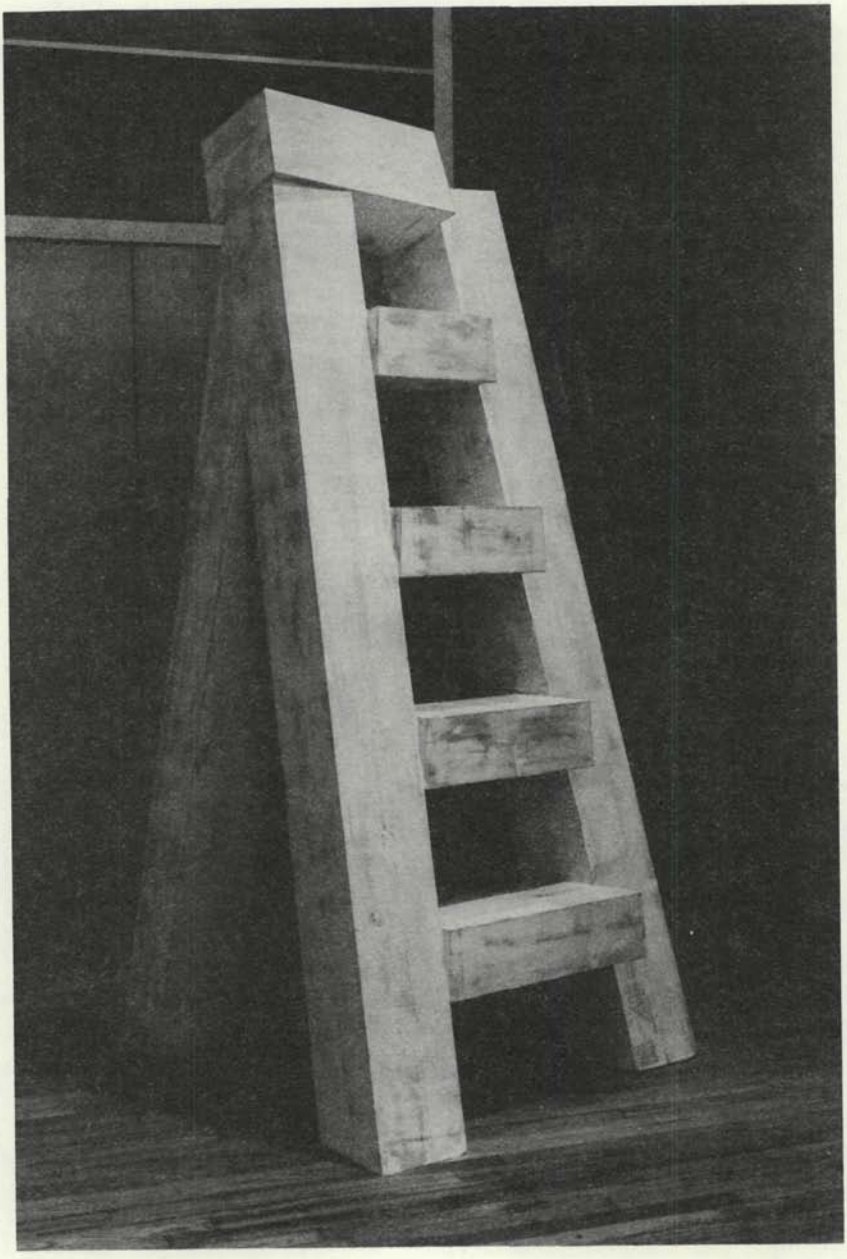

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